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# THOUGHTS FROM THE GITA

BY

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR, M.A., B.L.

Retired Advocate, TIRUNELVELI



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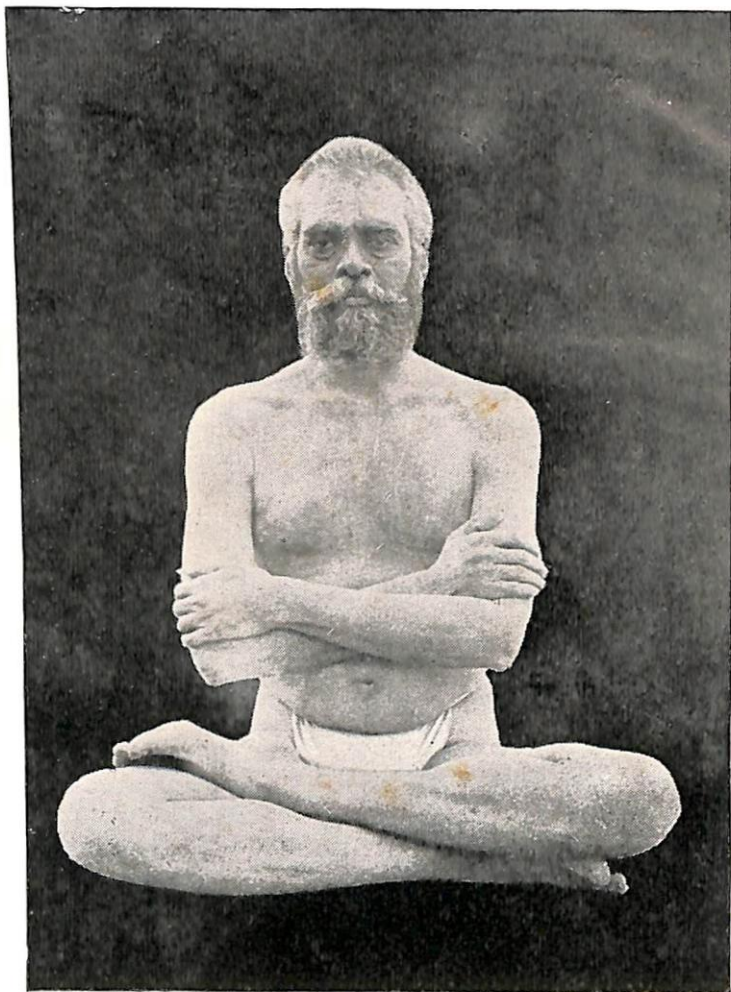


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Dedicated  
to the sacred memory of



SRI RAMANANDA SARASVATI SVAMINAH

WHO EXEMPLIFIED IN HIMSELF

THE IDEAL PREACHED IN THE GITA

## PREFACE

THIS is a humble attempt to record a few thoughts suggested by the study of the Gītā. It is not possible to do full justice to even any one of the priceless teachings that are found in that inexhaustible treasure-house of wisdom. Just with a view to assure myself that I have understood the teachings properly, I submitted this thesis to Srī Ramānanda Sarasvatī Svāminah (whom I had the honour of calling my father in his *Pūrvāśrama*) and, though he was at that time observing *mauna*, he was kind enough to peruse it and in returning it to me appended a note saying :

“This work is admirably well-thought out and exceedingly well-written. It is sure to be an eye-opener to many a groping spiritual aspirant. In the lasting spiritual interests of the right-thinking public, steps should be taken to have it immediately printed and published.”

Thanks to these encouraging words and his blessings, the book was published early in 1933. Prof. K. Sundarāma Aiyar, M.A. in his appreciative Foreword to that edition was pleased to characterise it as a “masterly and



authoritative exposition of the integrated and unified wisdom of the Veda and Vedānta as revealed in the Gītā." It had also a very good reception at the hands of the Press and the public including foreigners, particularly Mr. David MacIver (now of Bombay) and the late Dr. Theos Bernard of the United States. The copies were soon exhausted but owing to various circumstances beyond my control it was not possible for me to bring out a fresh edition till now.

It is no small satisfaction to me that this edition is launched into the world by the well-known firm of Messrs Ganesh & Co. and I hereby tender my heartfelt and grateful thanks to them.

It is my devout hope that this book though elementary will stimulate the reader to dive deep into the Gītā and profit by its valuable teachings.

Hyderabad

R. Krishnaswami Aiyar

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॥ ओं श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः ॥

## THOUGHTS FROM THE GĪTĀ

### CHAPTER I THE CONTEXT

#### I. *The Situation*

THERE is a charm about the Bhagavad Gītā; none can deny it. But as with other charms the Gītā also has an attractive side as well as a mysterious side. The beginner who wants to get acquainted with the teachings of the Gītā feels attracted towards it by its apparent simplicity but when he tries to understand it he finds himself confounded by the variety of conflicting teachings which it seems to convey. He is unable to extricate himself out of the confusion. He misses the point of the teachings. He thinks he sees in the Gītā several schools of thought. If he belongs to the modern school of scepticism, he concludes that the Gītā is not a composite whole but a medley of inconsistent thoughts put together by some mischief-maker and clandestinely interpolated into the Mahābhārata in order to give it an undeserved publicity.

First of all, to understand the Gītā aright, it is necessary to properly understand the context in which the teachings were given, the particular mentality of the pupil and the unique personality of the teacher.



A very common mistake that is made with reference to the Gītā is to treat it as a comprehensive treatise on Vedānta and seek for authority in it for every Vedāntic conception and for every practical rule of conduct. The mistake arises from the reader forgetting the setting of the episode in the scheme of the Mahābhārata. As above stated, scholars are not wanting even for enunciating the theory that the Gītā is a later interpolation in the Mahābhārata, basing their theory mainly on their own conception of the propriety of a philosophical discussion in the midst of opposing forces arrayed for battle. There is no such impropriety at all. Whatever may be the initial impetus which moves us sometimes to engage in serious activities, there still arises just before we launch into the activity itself a moment of inactivity, of thought, of hesitation, of doubt. It may be that to the unthinking man the excitement which induced the activity is strong enough to lead him on unconsciously into the activity itself before he realises where he is and without giving him any time to consider its propriety or even its feasibility; but, to the one who is not the victim of his own passions and retains the power of discrimination even in the midst of excitement and bustle, hesitation is sure to come on, its extent being proportionate directly to the gravity of the situation and inversely to the competency of the actor to decide.

## 2. *The Mind of Arjuna*

The situation in which Arjuna the noble warrior found himself was a most unenviable one when we bear in mind the extreme sensitiveness of his nature. In the situation itself there was nothing strange, for it was common to him and to the other warriors assembled on the battlefield. To the calm Yudhishtira and the noble Bhīshma and perhaps a few others, their grasp of what was Dharma and what was not was so sure and steady that they entertained no doubt about the propriety of engaging in battle when duty demanded it and their grasp was not any the less firm even when the foes that they had to kill happened to be their kith and kin. The majority of the other combatants were actuated by passions, various in their nature but all tending to blind them to the gravity of the step that they were about to take and preventing them effectively even from a consideration of the propriety or otherwise of the step. It may have been the hatred of the opponents or the love of their own side; it may even have been only an ardent desire for the fame of having taken part in the unprecedented war; it may have been to seek heaven by the short cut of a glorious death. We are not concerned with the particular motive but only with the fact that as regards the majority there were motives which made it impossible and unnecessary for them to raise or decide the abstract question of Dharma even if they were conscious of



any such question awaiting their decision. Arjuna had unfortunately neither the mental stability of his eldest brother nor the passionate impulsive nature of his other colleagues. We may therefore see for ourselves that his position was very embarrassing. Was the *duty* to fight paramount to the duty not to injure ? Here was a conflict of duties. Was the *desire* to kill his foes to be encouraged in preference to the desire not to kill his own kinsmen ? Here was a conflict of desires. Arjuna was thus caught between two opposing considerations and he had to decide summarily on the spot. The issue was a momentous one but the time at his disposal for deciding it was very short. It is no wonder that he felt his mind all in a whirl. But it was not a time for indecision. He therefore proceeded to decide on the *prima facie* aspects of the case.

“The duty not to injure is as much a duty as the duty to fight. But if I fight I shall be killing so many innocent persons thereby leading to the destruction of the sanctity of their families (I, 39). If I do not fight, they will all be saved from death and their families safeguarded from ruin. If my foes are cruel, they may perhaps kill me seeing that I am unarmed and averse to fight (I, 46). Is the possibility of my having to die at their hands to prevent me from the sure saving of those several others from certain death ? I shall therefore be selfless and cease to care for my welfare in the noble object of saving the lives of others. I there-

fore decide in favour of the duty not to injure. Fighting is not worthy of such as I who realize the havoc that a battle causes.”

“Again, the desire to get rid of a foe is as legitimate as the desire not to kill a kinsman. The very object of killing a foe is to secure uninterrupted enjoyment of the pleasures of the world in the midst of one’s own friends and kinsmen. If therefore the foe that has to be killed happens to be a friend or a kinsman, the enjoyment that is secured by killing him is sure to be ever alloyed with the painful feeling that the enjoyment was obtained at the cost of the loss of a friend or kinsman (II, 56). Is such an enjoyment worth the trouble of obtaining? I shall not therefore deal death to my kinsmen, even though they may be my foes, simply to secure this doubtful enjoyment.”

### 3. *His Feelings*

Such were the reasonings of Arjuna before he threw down his bow *Gāndeeva*. But the most pitiable part of it was that he was not sure that his reasonings were right, for he dimly felt that he was not reasoning out the matter from the standpoint of abstract Right and Wrong but that he was swayed by the love for his kinsmen even while professing to consider a problem of Dharma. This accounts for the apparent inconsis-



tency in Arjuna exclaiming first decidedly that he will not fight (II, 9) and then appealing to Śrī Krishna to tell him what he ought to do (III, 2) and then finally actually fighting (XVIII, 73).

It will be interesting to consider how Arjuna the stern warrior gradually evolved into Arjuna the non-fighter. This is shown in a few characteristic touches of Vyāsa. Arjuna when he defiantly blew his conch (I, 15) and when afterwards he asked his divine charioteer to drive his chariot to the centre of the battlefield (I, 21) was as determined as ever on fighting and he would have laughed at the idea of walking quietly away from the battle-field. He only wanted to know who were his opponents, to see for himself which of them he could give combat to on equal terms and which he could relegate to his inferiors (I, 22). If he feels any pity for his foes, it is not because of any sorrow at their impending death but only because of their fighting on the wrong side. His pity therefore, if any, is confined to the combatants on the opposing side (I, 23).

The Lord noted this mentality and found from the words and the attitude of Arjuna that the desire to win and wrest the kingdom from his foes was predominant in his mind. Out of His infinite grace He wanted to clear Arjuna's mind of the impurity of selfishness and to make him fight selflessly from a pure sense of duty. The seed therefore for the change in the mentality of Arjuna may be seen to have been thrown

by Śrī Krishna Himself. To effect this change, the selfishness has first to be diluted before it can be eradicated. From concerning itself solely with his personal welfare the selfishness must be made to widen its scope so as to include in it his kindred before it can be led to extend to the whole of mankind and finally to the whole of creation at which final stage selfishness becomes synonymous with selflessness. Śrī Krishna therefore when he takes the chariot to the centre of the field does not refer to the "foes" or the "combatants" assembled there but wants Arjuna to see the Kurus before him (I, 25), so that He draws pointed attention to their kinship rather than to their hostile nature. This seed, little as it is, is sufficient for the sensitive Arjuna. He being himself as much a Kuru as his opponents is naturally led by this subtle suggestion to forget the hostile character of the warriors assembled on the other side and to recollect vividly their close kinship with himself. The effect was immense. When he surveyed the warrior host he completely forgot the cruel wrongs that he had suffered at the hands of Duryodhana and his party and saw before him only his brothers, uncles and cousins, saw before him only an array of teachers, friends and well-wishers (I, 26-27). He stood aghast at the spectacle. Perceiving as he did only the kinsmen-aspect of the warriors before him, he felt shocked to realise that he was about to kill them. He saw he had almost forgotten that by killing them he would be killing his own men.



So long as he thought them his enemies he could have fought with them unconcernedly and even with zest. If he had looked upon them with indifferent eyes confining himself to his own duties, he could equally have fought them without any scruple. But the moment he felt that they were related to him as his "own" it was impossible for him to fight them. Well might his heart stagger from the impending destruction of his "own" kinsmen (I, 28). His limbs give way; his mouth dries up; his body trembles; the hairs stand on end; the Gāndeeva slips from his hand; his skin burns; he is unable to stand; and his mind seems to be in a whirl (I, 28-29). This is not due to cowardice. Nor is it due to a mere sense of humane aversion to cause injury to a living being. It is on the other hand the outcome of a desire to save the men whom he has come to look upon as his "own". It is a selfish desire no doubt but the selfishness transcends his own person and extends to his kinsmen disregarding the narrower personal feeling. He is shocked at finding himself about to engage in a conflict solely for his personal ends at the imminent risk to his own kinsmen. He is ashamed at his own selfishness which has brought about such a situation. He would try even now to avert the disaster, even if, in doing so, he has to sacrifice his personal ends.

4. *His Doubts*

If Arjuna had stopped at the expression of this intense feeling of his that he could not kill his own kinsmen, perhaps even Śrī Krishna would have found it difficult to influence Arjuna to fight in violation of that feeling, for, to a man who is swayed solely by his feelings, all arguments and persuasions are generally useless. But Arjuna was not such a person with whom the feelings were the prime motive power. Arjuna trained as he had been in the path of Dharma would not hesitate to fight even against the dictates of his heart if the rules of Dharma required it. Arjuna himself was conscious of his own attitude, but was reluctant to believe that the call of Dharma could land him in a situation where he had perforce to subordinate and violate his feelings. That is why he tries his best to persuade himself that the battle he was about to engage in was "sinful" and that he would be true to Dharma only if he desisted therefrom. Śrī Krishna was easily able to point out the fallacious nature of his reasonings about the Dharma aspect of the war and to show to him that his aversion to fight was not really due to his Dharmic consciousness but solely because of his attachment to his kindred. That Arjuna is trying to confuse the two issues and to arrive at a conclusion which will be consistent both with Dharma and his personal feelings may be seen from his saying "what *pleasure* can we have after killing the sons of Dhritarāshtra ?



If we kill them, only *sin* will attach itself to us (1,36). O ! what a *sin* are we about to commit by preparing to kill *our own men* ! ” (1,45).

Passages like these give us good ground for presuming that Arjuna would not have minded or thought it a *sin* to kill the combatants if he could derive *pleasure* from it or at least if they were not *his own* relations. In either of those cases there would have been no conflict between Dharma and his personal feelings and he would not have hesitated to follow the dictates of Dharma. This unconscious attempt at confusing what we are doing with what is right is universal, and Arjuna was not free from it. He was more straightforward when he merely said “O, Mādhava, how can we be *happy* after killing our own men.” (1,37).

He assumes a high tone of renunciation when he says “I desire not victory nor kingdom nor pleasures. What use have we for kingdom, pleasures or even our lives ? (1,32). I do not like to strike at these persons even if they strike at me. I would not do it even for the mastery of the three worlds, would I do it for the sake of this earth ? (1,35).” Yet there is a false ring about it. This renunciation is *not* due to a perception of the impermanence and illusory nature of all enjoyments. He does not at all object to the enjoyments themselves but only to securing them by the killing of his cousins. His attachment to his opposing kindred is for the moment more potent than his attachment to the pleasures of the world or of the worlds to come. He would very

much like to have the latter if he could manage to have them without striking a single blow at his relations. His renunciation is therefore not absolute but is only an expression of the relative preference between two objects of attachment. It is therefore a mistake to suppose that Arjuna by his professed renunciation of the pleasures of this life and of the life hereafter has satisfied the condition of Vairāgyā or Non-desire to qualify him to receive the highest teaching of the nature of the Self. On the other hand, it will be seen from the above that Arjuna *did* want the pleasures but wanted them *unalloyed*. Arjuna knew his own uncertain mind far better than some of his admirers. He felt that his own nature prompted him to fight but felt at the same time his heart reluctant to do so. He was in a fix. He did not know what to do. At one moment he made up his mind not to fight and threw down his weapons (I, 47). All the same he was not so sure that his decision was the right one to arrive at, for he appeals immediately afterwards to Śrī Krishna for His directions (II, 7). He feels a depression and a heaviness of heart and feels himself incompetent to finally decide what is best for him. He seeks refuge in the Lord to instruct him as to what exactly is for his welfare.

### 5. *His Seeming Renunciation*

I have heard some scholars attempt to import into the words "I am thy pupil. Please instruct me who



has sought refuge in Thee" (11, 7), the conception of self-surrender to a Guru, an essential requisite for acquiring the knowledge of the Self. But it is quite clear from the context that Arjuna was far below that stage, that he had no idea of surrendering himself at all to Śrī Krishna and that his doubts had nothing to do with the abstract problems of the Self but were concerned only with a practical question of Dharma. In fact, the very fact of his mental depression disqualifies him for the reception of the highest knowledge. That Śrī Krishna rightly gauged the qualifications of his pupil at their true level is clearly seen from the method of argument which He adopts. If the Lord had believed for a moment that Arjuna had the spirit of genuine absolute non-desire, He would never have brought forward the persuasive arguments which he actually uses, sometimes promising rewards (11, 32), sometimes threatening punishments (11, 33-36) of a very worldly kind. "If you fall, you attain heaven. If you win, you enjoy the earth. Therefore get up, O Son of Kuntī, determined for battle (11, 37)." Again Śrī Krishna knew full well that the desire of Arjuna for virtuous fame as a warrior would triumph over his feelings of compassion and love and He utilises that fact to goad him into action. "If you desist from battle, those great warriors who have till now thought well of you will think lightly of you, by presuming that you so desist out of fear (11, 35); and those who are not well disposed towards you will say all sorts of things about your

prowess. What can be more painful than this (II, 36)? This bad fame will not fade away with the lapse of time. To one who has been respected, bad fame is worse than death (II, 34)". This is certainly not the kind of argument to be addressed to a person who has reached the stage of non-desire and therefore must be indifferent to fame or calumny.

The Lord never lost sight of the true mentality of his friend and pupil even when the latter sought to soar far above his capabilities in the region of philosophical thought. Even when favouring him with a vision of His own cosmic Personality, He thought it expedient to include in it a vision of all the enemies of Arjuna rushing to their death (XI, 26-28) and to assure His astonished devotee that he would triumph over his foes, earn undying fame and enjoy the kingdom (XI, 33). To Arjuna's objection, however, to have the triumph, fame and kingdom stained with blood (II, 5) the Lord assures him that He is prepared to take upon Himself the blame of killing them and says that, as He has already determined upon killing them and sealed their fate, Arjuna cannot prevent it even if he wanted to (XI, 32), that Arjuna has but to act as the instrument of His divine will (XI, 33) and that he may therefore fight with a free conscience (XI, 34). This assurance takes away the point of Arjuna's objection and he therefore consents to fight as directed by the Lord.



6. *His Lesson*

Śrī Krishna was quite aware that when Arjuna made preparations for the war and entered the battlefield he was as much actuated by desire for kingdom and fame as by a sense of Dharma. The main object of Śrī Krishna's teaching was to eradicate the former element from his mind and make him confine himself to the latter so that by the practice of desireless action he might qualify himself for the reception of true knowledge. In dealing therefore with the conflict of duties, the Divine Lord refers to the Śāstras alone as the decisive authority on the matter (XVI, 24) other considerations sentimental or otherwise being quite irrelevant and incapable of outweighing the Sāstric injunction (XVI, 23), and a consideration of the relative entertainability of two conflicting desires being entirely foreign to a problem of Dharma. Knowing as He does that all desires, whether they be good or bad, equally enchain the aspirant and prevent him from progressing in the true path of Dharma, Śrī Krishna emphasises the duty to perform the activities prescribed by the Śāstras and insists upon the eradication of desire even in the performance of that duty.

This was the main teaching of the Gītā so far as Arjuna was concerned but, as he seemed to think himself competent to renounce the duty of fighting, Śrī Krishna had to tell him that the path of renunciation was not for such as he but was reserved for persons

who had already faithfully and successfully trodden the path of selfless duty and had purified and qualified their minds for the reception of the absolute Truth. This naturally led the curious Arjuna to ask his obliging Teacher to tell him somewhat of such persons and of their goal (II, 54). In obliging him the Divine Teacher had necessarily to say something of persons who were really no longer aspirants but had actually reached their goal. Arjuna fascinated by that high ideal state of experience was curious to know its nature and the qualifications that lead up to it, with a view to know whether he could aspire to it himself. Śrī Krishna satisfied his curiosity and told him the magnificent glory of that state of absolute freedom, while at the same time He was careful to point out to his pupil that he was not then qualified at all even to aspire to that stage and that he had to undergo much preliminary training in selfless activity before he could be the recipient of Jñāna or Knowledge. The teaching therefore of the higher Jñāna is purely incidental in the setting of the Gītā, and it is therefore not proper to deduce from the greater and more frequent insistence on selfless activity that Śrī Krishna has enunciated a "philosophy of *action*" in preference or opposition to a "philosophy of knowledge", for it will be seen from the Gītā itself that action is not an end in itself but only a preparatory step for the attainment of knowledge. Śrī Krishna had to lay emphasis upon selfless activity, for He had to wean His pupil from desire and affection to duty and selfless-



ness. Arjuna was not then qualified to receive any higher teaching except as a piece of information which he could avail himself of only at some future time. In fact he is told he will have to learn it again after qualifying himself, for then alone can the teaching bear any fruit (IV, 34).

The above reading of the mind of Arjuna may not seem complimentary to him, but it cannot be denied that it is the mind of the typical man who honestly desires to lead a blameless and virtuous, but at the same time happy, life. It is really such earnest people alone that secure and retain the friendship of the Divine Lord. Neither the very wise nor the very ignorant require His guidance, the former being self-sufficient and the latter thinking himself so.



## CHAPTER II

### NATURAL ACTIVITY

#### I. *The Self and Nature*

THE exact relation of activity to knowledge is a matter very difficult to determine but it is so difficult only so long as our conceptions of what is activity and what is knowledge remain lax. When we speak of an individual being active, we do not care to stop and consider whether the individual that we speak of is a single or a composite entity. If he is a composite entity, what are the elements which make up that entity and which of these elements are active and which not? These questions, natural as they are, rarely trouble us till we cultivate the habit of introspection or analytical thought. But the Divine Teacher of the Gītā cannot leave them unanswered. According to Him, the “doer” or the subjective factor in every activity is a composite entity made up of his “self” and his “nature”. The activity is really due to this “nature”, the “self” remaining essentially ever non-active. The Lord says, “He alone is a Seer who realises that all activities are done by the nature alone and that the self is non-active” (XIII, 29).

Whenever therefore anybody thinks of himself as being active, there is an antecedent confusion of the

“self” and the “nature” (III, 27). He has no idea that his “nature” is something different from his “self”; without trying to analyse himself, he identifies his “self” with his “nature”. This mistaken sense of Self or “I” in something which is essentially distinct from himself is the prime cause of appropriating to himself the function of “doing” which really appertains only to the “nature” with which he is confusing himself.

The ultimate knowledge consisting as it does of the absolute freedom from this confusion cannot possibly co-exist with activities which depend for their existence on the sense of doership, a creature of that confusion. Similarly, so long as activities and the antecedent sense of doership continue it is impossible to say of that doer that he has true knowledge, for the latter presupposes the annihilation of the doership and the consequent activities. There cannot therefore be any sort of co-ordination nor even of subordination as between activity and knowledge, for either of those relationships assumes the possibility of co-existence. This does not mean that activities are useless to a would-be knower, for a would-be knower is not a knower yet and is therefore not yet free from the sense of doership. In fact, activities are very useful to him and really form a necessary stage in his progress towards the realisation of the non-active ideal. In other words, the sense of doership is co-eval with the sense of “I”, and it will be a physical impossibility to do away with the former so long as the latter subsists. The latter will



disappear only when the self who is inherent in the "I" realises his transcendence over the "nature" which gave him the false conception of "I". Until that stage is reached, none can cease to be a doer. In the words of the Lord, none can remain inactive even for a moment (III, 5). It is impossible for the embodied self to give up activities altogether (XVIII, 11). The only question therefore for all of us who have not yet realised that transcendence is "What are the activities in which we have to engage ourselves?" Three alternatives present themselves to us :—

1. Are we to allow ourselves to be merely at the mercy of the "nature" and permit *it* to sway us as it likes ?

2. Shall we confine ourselves to such activities as are agreeable to the nature itself but at the same time tend to reduce its potency ? or

3. Shall we engage ourselves in activities which aim directly at suppressing and annihilating that nature ?

It will be clear from a consideration of these three alternatives that the first can never be recommended to an aspirant who desires to rise above his "nature" and that the third is a very difficult course which requires great capacity of will-power and endurance. The easiest method of progress is therefore along the line of the second alternative, *vis.*, that of activity consistent with one's own nature but calculated at the same time to reduce its binding force. Śrī Krishna prescribes both the latter two alternatives in His



Gītā, but in view of the practical difficulties in the way of the third alternative he lays greater emphasis on the second as the easier one for the ordinary aspirant (V, 2).

## 2. *Activity Classified*

If we analyse the activities of an individual, it will be found that they are either consciously done or unconsciously done; that is, the mental element is present in some activities while it is absent in others. Strictly speaking, it is not proper to include in the definition of activity the acts in which the mental impulse is entirely absent; nor can we call him an actor who has no idea that he is acting at all. We leave aside therefore such activities as the acts of breathing, digestion, assimilation etc., which are purely reflex in character. The other kinds of activity where the mental element is present we may comprehensively include under the name of Responsible Action. As already stated, these may be classified under three heads :—

1. Natural Activity which is swayed by nature.
2. Congenial Activity which allows some scope for nature but aims at its gradual elimination.
3. Forced Activity which aims at a suppression and direct elimination of nature.

We shall consider all these alternatives in some detail,

but as most of us are only in the stage of the first alternative, that is, are being swayed by nature, we shall begin with a consideration of that stage. Here the confusion between the self and the nature reigns supreme and it is impossible to differentiate between them. The former forgets that it has an independent existence and allows itself to be led by the nature into all sorts of activity. The person in this stage is not strictly an active doer; on the other hand he is passive in the hands of nature; he is *made* to do. (III, 5). But the person himself is not aware of this fact that he is made to do but thinks himself the doer, for the confusion between the nature and himself happens to be complete □ (III, 27).

### 3. *Natural Activity*

This first kind of activity which we have designated Natural Activity may again be subdivided into three classes :—

1. Where the mental element is almost nil and nature alone is the motive power,
2. Where the mental impulse born of nature is alone the motive power, and
3. Where the mental impulse born of nature is strengthened by the conscious exercise of the will.

We may therefore conceive of Responsible Natural Activity in three forms :—

ॐ कार्यतेहि अवस्थाः कर्म प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः  
 □ प्रकृतैः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि स्वतः  
 अहंकारे विवर्द्धन्ता कर्ता अहमिति मन्यते



1. Instinctive.
2. Impulsive.
3. Wilful.

It is necessary to understand the significance of the three words Instinct, Impulse and Will which we have used to designate the respective elements in the three kinds of natural activity. We cannot better explain the distinction among them than by giving an example. If I get stung by a scorpion, the first act that I do is to shake off the scorpion and save my body from further stings. The next is the sense of resentment against it and the attempt to give vent to it immediately before I have time to think whether I may do so or not. The last is the deliberate attempt to kill the scorpion that stung me and perhaps other scorpions as well. Here, the avoidance of pain is due to *Instinct*; the aversion to the thing causing pain is due to *Impulse*; the active hatred of the thing causing pain is due to the *Will*. Similarly the seeking of pleasure is due to *Instinct*; the attraction to the thing causing pleasure is due to *Impulse*; the active desire for the thing causing pleasure is due to the *Will*.

#### 4. *Instinct*

It will be seen from the above that the instinct is abstract in its nature and is undefined, its sole function being the avoidance of pain and the seeking



of pleasure. For example, hunger is an instinctive feeling; it does not prescribe any particular mode of appeasing itself; it only requires food of any sort that is capable of appeasing hunger. The animals which are guided mainly by Instinct cannot be said to *love* their food or feel themselves mentally *attracted* towards it, for it is a matter of daily experience that as soon as their hunger is appeased they are quite indifferent as to what becomes of the remnants of food and have no thought of food at all till they again become hungry. We can only say that the animal *requires* food and not that it *desires* it. Again the cow suckles her calf mainly out of instinct; she wants to ease herself of the pain caused by the distended udders. It cannot be said that the cow suckles her calf out of love or affection for the latter, as *we* understand those terms. In giving these examples, I must not be understood as saying that the mental element is entirely wanting but only that the mental element is not the motive power but only the instinct. The mental impulse and the will are under almost complete subordination to the instinct. The most elementary of such instincts is the instinct of preservation of life. It is common to the lowest animal and the highest of spiritual aspirants. As in this stage the mind is almost passive, the Śāstras recognise that it will not be proper to import the ideas of virtue and sin here. Therefore it is that the Śāstras do not mention any rewards or punishments for the instinctive actions of the animals or even for the

actions of children and lunatics who are but passive instruments in the hands of instinct. The responsibility is therefore partly shifted on to those who can properly guide and keep *them* under control. Again it is this kind of activity that the Lord speaks of when he says "one who acts solely for his bodily wants incurs no sin" (IV, 21).

### 5. Impulse

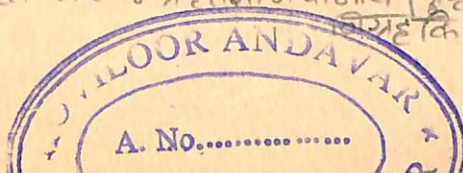
The next higher stage of Impulse is reached when a mental impression is left behind by the thing that satisfies or offends the Instinct. That is, in this stage the perception of good and bad relative to oneself is had, a perception of the desirability or otherwise of a thing with reference to his instinctive avoidance of pain or acquisition of pleasure. This perception is, as may be expected, the result of the innumerable prior experiences of the relation between a particular thing and the pain or pleasure that ensues as a result of the experiencer having come in contact with that thing on those occasions. For example, only an animal that had felt the whip before could be afraid at the sight of it. Fear therefore is a mental impulse caused by the perception of the undesirability in the thing causing the fear. It is not necessary that the individual should recollect all his prior experiences of the relationship. All those experiences have had their share in shaping the nature

७ शरीरं केवलं कर्म. कुर्वन् न आप्नोति किं लिप्तिषम्



and the intensity of the impulse. They are therefore not lost but only re-appear in a different form. As the root of the impulse is in the experiences which are long since past and as the present impulse is but an effect of those experiences and as we cannot now possibly affect the nature of those past experiences, it follows that it is not possible now to completely prevent this impulse from arising when we see a particular object. That is why Śrī Krishna says, "Even the knowing man acts according to his own nature. All beings act according to their nature. What can prevention do?" (III, 33). "Attraction and Repulsion are inherent in the object of each sense" (III, 34). The best that we can do by the exercise of our will is to prevent this impulse from carrying us away into activities which the intellect does not approve of. In the words of the Lord, "One must not become the victim of these two, attraction and repulsion, for they stand in the way of his progress" (III, 34). If our will is weak or we allow ourselves to remain passive, the impulse will be sufficient to make us act even in spite of ourselves. To Arjuna's pertinent question "By what then is a person made to commit sin even against his will, as if forced to do so?" (III, 36), the answer of Śrī Krishna is "That is desire. That is resentment. That is the offspring of the quality called Rajas" (III, 37). In the end also He warns Arjuna thus "Fruitless is this endeavour of yours when you think self-willed that you will not fight, for your nature will nevertheless

सहकां चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्जनिवानाणि । प्रवृत्तौ यावत् भूतानि  
निरुद्धं किं करिष्यामि ।





make you do so. What out of ignorance you want now not to do, you will nevertheless do involuntarily, bound as you are by your own activities born of your nature." (XVIII, 59-60).

## 6. *Will*

The next kind of Natural Activity is where the will plays an active part. It aims at a conscious carrying out of the dictates of the Instinct and the Impulse. Here the will is not content to play a subordinate part, but assumes to itself the function of finding out special forms of activity which will secure to the individual the satisfaction of the Instinct and the Impulse. The individual in this stage will seek food not only when he is hungry; nor will he be attracted by the food only when he sees it; he will, on the other hand, "love" it; that is, he will seek to have it even when he is not hungry and he will feel himself attracted towards it even when it is beyond his reach and he will therefore work for it moved thereto by the store of his past experiences which have taught him that it is an object capable of giving him pleasure. All kinds of deliberate activity which aim at the securing of a particular object of pleasure or the avoidance of a particular object of pain come under this head. The object must be present before the mind of the individual and his will must be directed towards realising that object. But all the same

the will is not the motive power at all, however important a part it may assume at this stage, as after all it is only subservient to the dictates of nature. The will here is only an instrument, however refined and useful it may be, in the hands of nature which is the real motive power or "actor". However much one may arrogate to himself the doership, still he is no active agent at all in the full sense of the term, for he is but obeying the dictates of his inborn nature.

It may be seen from the above that the three kinds of Natural Activity, *viz.*, the Instinctive, the Impulsive and the Wilful, correspond to the feeling of Want, the feeling of Desirability and the feeling of Desire. The Karma Kāṇḍa of the Vedas is concerned mainly with such activities and has therefore for its object the satisfaction of this Want, the enunciation of this Desirability and the regulation of this Desire, on lines least harmful to the spiritual interests of the individual. It does not aim at a destruction of the nature but only at its satisfaction consistent with the spiritual safety of the individual. By spiritual safety is meant only the prevention of degradation and not any advance in the path of spiritual progress. He performs a particular action and gets its fruit. He is again tempted to do the same action and again gets the same fruit and so on. As the Lord has characteristically put it, "they that resort to the Dharma of the Vedas, longing as they do only for objects of pleasure, get only this going and returning" (IX, 21). To make any perceptible



advance therefore towards a realisation of the true Self, it is absolutely insufficient to resort to any kind of activity which subordinates the will to the service of nature. The three kinds of Natural Activity which we have been considering till now cannot therefore help the aspirant to transcend his nature and he has necessarily to take to higher forms of activity which aim at reducing the potency of the "nature" and therefore at releasing the self from its bondage. The Gītā accordingly concerns itself more with these higher activities than with the natural activities we have dealt with above. If Śrī Krishna refers to the latter, it is only with a view to ask the aspirant to turn his back upon them and confine himself to the former activities. Those former activities are, as already stated, of two grades : (1) those that allow some scope for nature though they aim at the same time at its gradual elimination and (2) those that aim at a direct annihilation of that nature. The first grade we have called Congenial Activities and the second Forced Activities. The Congenial Activities will be the next subject for our consideration.



## CHAPTER III

### CONGENIAL ACTIVITY

#### 1. *Karma Yoga*

It has been mentioned in the foregoing pages that to realise the self in its ever pure form it is necessary to transcend the nature which envelops it and that to transcend that nature it is necessary to discard at first the three kinds of natural activity we have considered till now. The sense of doership cannot disappear until the nature is actually eradicated. The aspirant who is able to discard the natural activities retains still the sense of doership and therefore has to be active but his activities will aim at transcending the nature. It has been stated before that such activities are twofold according as they are congenial to the nature itself or are antagonistic to it. The congenial activities are prescribed for those who are still in the grip of nature; the antagonistic activities are for those who are able to shake off this grip sometimes but feel it ever returning again and again.

As the object of the congenial activities is to retain the activities which do not violate the dictates of nature but at the same time help to reduce its potency, they are so regulated that the senses of Want, Desirability and Desire which we considered the motive elements in natural activity are reduced gradually to a minimum.

The more our desires the more will be the number of objects that appeal to us as desirable. The more such objects, the wider the range of our want. It is well known that things that seem *necessary* to some persons are viewed as luxuries by others. This only shows that the desire range of the former is wider than that of the latter and that the desire impulse has by its persistency become even instinctive. We are therefore asked to reduce first the number of our desires. If we do that, the number of things that appeal to us as desirable and the number of our wants will steadily go down. Śrī Krishna therefore preaches the practice of non-desire even when we are engaged in the performance of activities due to the nature inherent in us. But He fully knows that sudden transition from a stage of desire to that of absolute non-desire is an impossibility. To reduce the number of our desires therefore, He wants our desire to be weaned from the particular objects before us and to be directed towards a higher object of desire.

The Lord prescribes two methods of doing this. In the first, the higher object is the obtaining of the grace of a Personal God (III, 9); in the second, it is the purification of our minds (XVIII, 5). Strictly speaking, it is not possible to obtain that grace without purifying our minds nor is it possible to purify our minds without the help of that divine grace. But Śrī Krishna prefers to sometimes distinguish between the two objects, which are really one in essence, as He knows that to



some aspirants the one may appeal in preference to the other. In either method the mental attitude required of the doer is that of non-desire. In either method the ultimate goal promised is the transcendence of nature and the realisation of the Supreme Self. So long as the essential element of non-desire is present, it is immaterial whether he has as his objective goal the grace of a personal God or the perfection of himself, for in either case will he be qualified to be the recipient of the higher knowledge about the transcendental nature of the Supreme Self. Both these kinds of activity therefore are usually clubbed together and go by the common name of Karma Yoga. As by these activities we aim at a stage of non-desire, it will be obvious that no sort of activity which is directed towards the satisfaction of a deliberate desire can come under this class. Of the three kinds of natural activity therefore, it is impossible to conceive of any circumstances under which the wilful or desireful activities can be classed under Karma Yoga, for the element of non-desire is entirely antagonistic to them.

It is therefore the first condition of a Karma Yogin that he must be able to discard the wilful natural activity, that is, he is able to rescue his will from *conscious* slavery to nature. But all the same he cannot escape the Instinct and the Impulse which insist on being satisfied and claim at regulating his activities ignoring his will. Śrī Krishna consequently preaches the doctrine of Karma Yoga for those who feel the

irresistible nature of this Instinct and this Impulse. He simply wants us to be passive, absolutely passive but consciously passive unlike in the natural activity where we are unconsciously passive. In following the Instinct and satisfying it, we must not think we are doing it for any purpose of our own, but that in doing so we are fulfilling the purpose of God. Our personal considerations must be kept out even when the Instinct is being satisfied by us. If we allow the slightest personal element to intrude into this satisfaction, we will be sowing the seed of a future impulse and a future desire. Śrī Krishna therefore insists on a dedication to Him of even our instinctive activities. "Whatever you do, whatever you eat...dedicate it to Me" (IX, 27).

## 2. *Swadharma*

Similarly with impulsive activities. In engaging ourselves in them, we cannot be as passive as we are when we have Instinct alone to dictate to us, for here the mind is more aware and has a perception of good and evil. A discrimination is therefore quite possible and our aim ought to be to encourage the good impulses and to discourage the evil ones. Again in that discrimination we may have to rely on other guides than our mere impulse. For example, if I see a beautiful fruit I may feel tempted by it and think it desirable; when however a friend informs me that it is a poisonous fruit the temptation



ceases and I begin to think it undesirable; that is, my sense of desirability in the fruit is outweighed by the sense of undesirability. All is therefore not good that appeals to us as good at first sight. As our first impulses are likely to go wrong, the Vedas take upon themselves the function of telling us what are the impulses which are good to each one of us and which we may obey with benefit to ourselves and what are the activities in which we may engage ourselves in pursuance of those impulses but without hurting us in any way. Those impulses are collectively called *Swabhāva* and these activities *Swadharma*. The latter activities are, as may be expected, prescribed on a due consideration of the inherent impulses which in their potential stage go by the name of "qualities" (XVIII, 41).

The much abused caste system is the result of the Vedic classification of activities on the basis of this *Swabhāva* or Collective Impulse. As the impulses are infinite in number, the activities have also to be infinite, but that does not exclude the possibility of certain outstanding qualities which make a classification practicable (IV, 13). If a person with a good *Swabhāva* does not engage himself in such activities as would help him to utilise the *Swabhāva* itself for his betterment, it is no proof that the *Swabhāva* is non-existent in him. If the Divine Teacher therefore mentions certain qualities as inherent in and certain activities as appropriate to certain castes (XVIII, 42-44), that only means that the individuals in those castes ought to en-

courage those qualities and perform those activities if they aim at spiritual progress or desire at least to continue in their present status. If the individuals allow those qualities to lie dormant and leave those activities alone, it is not the fault of the Divine Classifier. He takes responsibility only for the accuracy of the classification; it is for the persons in the respective classes to decide for themselves whether they will utilise the advantages offered them or not.

Again, as the prescribed activities or Swadharma are prescribed with reference to the Swabhāva of the several individuals, it follows that it will be a mistake to suppose that what is Dharma for one is also Dharma for another irrespective of their Swabhāvas. In fact, what is Swadharma for a particular Swabhāva will be Para-Dharma for a different Swabhāva. If therefore an individual with the latter Swabhāva attempts to engage himself in the activities prescribed for an individual of the former Swabhāva, he is surely attempting to violate his own Swabhāva and neglect his own Swadharma, with the result that instead of helping himself to any extent he will be deliberately and seriously hurting himself. The acceptability of any activity does not depend upon its seeming desirability or seeming superiority to another but solely upon its appropriateness to the particular Swabhāva of the individual who seeks to engage himself in it. That is why the Lord in insisting upon the practice of Swadharma says "One should not give up the activities born with him though



they may seem sinful (XVIII, 48). .....It is good to die in the carrying out of one's Swadharma but Para-Dharma is fearful (III, 35). Swadharma even if it seems bad is better than Para-Dharma however well performed. None incurs sin by performing the activities prescribed according to Swabhāva." (XVIII, 47).

### 3. *Its Characteristics*

We have now seen that Swadharma is the particular activity appropriate to the collective Impulse or Swabhāva of a particular individual and calculated at the same time to prevent his slipping down from his present stage. But Swadharma, being as much an activity as every other, is sure to bring to the individual some fruits of his activities. Instead of confining himself solely to the desire for the grace of God or mental perfection, he may be tempted to view these fruits as his objective goal. If he falls in with this temptation there is no difference between him and him that performs the kind of wilful natural activity already considered. He cannot therefore aspire to progress in spiritual knowledge though he may keep himself from slipping lower down. We have therefore stated before that the only persons that are competent to tread the stage of congenial activity which we are considering now are those who are able to eschew sensuous desire from their minds. They are those who

may be said to have no objective goal at all except the attainment of the grace of God or the perfection of their minds. As desire in the ordinary sense is therefore absent, the activities are being performed simply because they are so enjoined by the Śāstras for one aiming at spiritual progress; and the Lord praises such activities in no uncertain terms and characterises them all as Sātwika. "When a sacrifice prescribed by the Vedas is performed by persons who do not desire for its fruits but do it steadying their minds with the thought that it has to be done, such a sacrifice is called a Sātwika one. (XVII, 11). When the threefold penance (in mind, speech and body) is performed by persons who do not desire for its fruits but do it dispassionately with great faith, the wise call it a Sātwika one (XVII, 17). When a gift is made in the proper place and time to a proper person who has not done anything for the donor and is made simply because it has to be done, such a gift is called Sātwika (XVII, 20). Those desirous of liberation perform the several acts of sacrifice, penance and gift with no desire for the fruits but simply uttering the word "That", the name of the Supreme Self. (XVII, 25). Sacrifice, gift and penance purify the firm-minded (XVIII, 5). It is my firm opinion that even these have to be performed but without attachment or desire for the fruits (XVIII, 6). When a prescribed activity is performed without attachment or desire for the fruits but simply because it has to be done, it is considered to be really a Sātwika renunciation.



(XVIII, 9). When a prescribed activity is done without attachment and not out of any desire to obtain the fruits nor out of affection or hatred, that activity is called Sātwika (XVIII, 23). That doer who is free from attachment and egotism, is endowed with courage and enthusiasm and is not affected by success or failure is called Sātwika (XVIII, 26)."

#### 4. *Its Advantages*

Nevertheless, Duty for duty's sake is too abstract an ideal for the ordinary man, however desireless he may be in the ordinary sense of that term; for accustomed as he has been from time immemorial to have before his mind's eye the fruits of an action before he engages himself in the action, it will be impossible for him to be absolutely free from attachment nor will it be possible to make him do anything unless something is promised to him. The Śāstras therefore do promise him something but <sup>they</sup> want that he should not decide for himself what that something shall be but leave it to God who certainly can be expected to know better than himself what is best for him. This "leaving the fruit to God" has two advantages : 1. securing a dispassionate attitude during the performance of the activity and 2. securing peace of mind by saving it the trouble of anticipating any particular result. Being dispassionate he can do the activity care-

fully and undisturbed. This attitude is usually called Asāṅga or non-attachment. The non-anticipation of a particular fruit saves him the pain of disappointment and further makes him view any result as the sign of the grace of God. If the result is good, he will be thankful; if it is bad, he will be equally thankful that it is not worse. He will resign the action to God and take for good whatever is given to him in return. If nothing is given to him, he will take it that the giving of nothing to him is the best for him. It is therefore quite impossible to shake the optimism of a person who resigns his actions to God. He will therefore be ever peaceful and his mind will be free from wrong of any sort. As Śrī Krishna aptly puts it, his "fever" will have gone out of him (III, 30).

The attitude of non-attachment and the absence of this fever of expectation make up the two essential constituents of what is called Karma Yoga. There need be no difference in the activities themselves that are prescribed for desireful activity and those prescribed for Karma Yoga. In fact the very same activities are prescribed; but the attitude of the Karma Yogin makes an enormous difference in the effect. Well may therefore Śrī Krishna exclaim at the power of transmutation which this Yoga-attitude possesses (II, 50). The same activity which is the cause of bondage becomes the cause of liberation when this attitude is preserved in the performance of that activity. (V, 12). In the words of the Lord, "He who performs all

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शक्तिमाप्नोति मोक्षकम्  
अयुक्तः कागदौघेण ध्वस्तस्तथा निबध्नाते

महि सुवर्णि, कमणि, ये ०२२२, अष्टांग, चोपसा, विगत उवरः॥



activities taking refuge in Me attains the imperishable eternal state by My grace. (XVIII, 56). Always therefore perform without attachment the activities that have to be done; for he who performs activities free from attachment attains the Supreme (III, 19). He who is in the right Yoga-attitude discarding the fruits of action attains the "permanent peace" (V, 12).

A parenthetical note is here necessary to explain that though permanent peace etc. are all promised to the Yogin, it does not mean that such a state immediately follows the practice of Karma Yoga, for there are many more steps to climb. These passages only mean that the aspirant in the Karma Yoga stage is in the right path towards the attainment of that state. As this Yoga is the main teaching intended for the practical guidance of Arjuna, it comes up frequently throughout the Gītā, but its definition is everywhere the same : "Station yourself in an attitude of Yoga. Give up attachment, be indifferent to success or failure and perform your actions. This equanimity is called Yoga" (II, 48).

### 5. A Different Activity

We have till now been considering Karma Yoga proper, that is, those activities which are enjoined by the Śāstras in consonance with the *Swabhāva* or Collective Impulse of the individual but which are at the

योगश्च कुरु कर्मणि संगं त्यक्त्वा व्यभिचारं  
सिद्ध्या आशिद्ध्या समं ब्रूयात् समत्वं योग उच्यते

same time required to be done with the objective not of obeying or satisfying that impulse but of reaching a higher desirable object, namely, the grace of God or the purification of the mind. There is however another kind of activity which is also sometimes included in the category of Karma Yoga. In that activity the element of non-desire and the desire to please God are equally present; but the distinction lies in the fact that while Karma Yoga proper is concerned with activities *appropriate* to one's *Swabhāva*, this variety cannot be said to be so appropriate but is only *not inconsistent* with the *Swabhāva*. The person therefore who is able to devote himself to these activities has learned to act independently of his *Swabhāva* but only within the limits prescribed by it. He cannot therefore give up the activities of the Karma Yoga proper or *Swadharma*, for he is still within the bounds of *Swabhāva*, but may devote his time and energy not engaged by those activities to the performance of this other kind of activity. To a person who is able to practise these extra activities devoted to God, there is no practical distinction between these and the activities prescribed as *Swadharma*, for both in his opinion are equally devoted to God. But the distinction is real from the standpoint of the aspirant who contents himself with the bare performance of the duties of *Swadharma*, for these extra activities will not come under the category of *Swadharma*.



## 6. *Need for Further Training*

From the above treatment we will be able to recognise that congenial activities aiming at the transcendence over nature may also be classed under three heads, similar to our classification of natural activities :

1. Instinctive activities like eating etc.
2. Impulsive activities or *Swadharma* prescribed in accordance with one's *Swabhāva*.
3. Wilful activities which are performed independently of *Swabhāva* but not violating it.

But these classes ought not to be confused with the corresponding classes of natural activity, for here in all these activities the will is ever present to direct and regulate the activities and is *not* subservient to nature. Also, a conscious attitude of non-desire is insisted upon. The will powerful as it is in this stage is yet unable to completely escape from the limitations of *Swabhāva*. That is why even the highest aspirant in this stage is unable to shake off the need for having an objective of some sort to guide him in his activities whether it be the attaining of the grace of God or the purification of his mind. It is impossible to cease to look forward to some objective till the objective is reached or the sense of doership disappears. When the grace of God is obtained or the mind becomes purified, the tendency will be to substitute the realisation of the Self as the still further objective. But the realisation of the Self which is purely and essentially a subjective

process cannot be had so long as the aspirant is obsessed with the necessity for having an objective. The only course therefore practicable and competent for the person who aspires to transcend his nature is to shake off the sense of doership. To do this, he has necessarily to counteract the tendencies of nature and confine himself to such activities as would free him from this sense of doership. These activities therefore we have called "Forced Activities". We shall proceed now to consider what they are.



## CHAPTER IV

### FORCED ACTIVITY

#### I. *Bhakti and Jñāna*

We have till now considered the two classes of activity which we designated respectively the Natural and the Congenial and which both allow scope, though in different degrees, for the play of the nature inherent in the individual. By following the latter class, he will have learnt to eschew desire from his activities; that is, he will be dispassionate while at the same time he will be retaining his sense of doership. There is a third and higher kind of activity which has for its aim the ultimate elimination of even this sense of doership. We have already given the name of Forced Activity to this class as it is mainly directed against the current of nature.

This elimination of the sense of doership can be secured in either of two ways. In both of them however there is the common factor that the doership is not annihilated downright but is only transferred to some entity other than the individual himself; the complete disappearance of the doership is incompatible with any conception of activity; so long therefore as the individual is conscious that he is active even though it be in the class of Forced Activity, the sense of doership will persist and will not die; the best therefore that

can be done is to transfer the doership to some other though the activity may be actually seen in the aspirant.

(1) If the individual though desireless still retains the sense of identity with his mind and his senses which are but his instruments, he is taught that he himself is but an instrument in the hands of a Higher Being and that therefore he is not justified in arrogating to himself the doership as he is only "made to do" at the will of that Being and that his activities must all be directed towards realising this true relationship of his to that Being. "The Lord resides in the hearts of all beings and by His power whirls all beings as if they are mounted on machines. In Him only take refuge with all your heart. By His grace you will attain the Supreme Peace, the Eternal State (XVIII, 61-62).... I am stationed in the hearts of all and from Me arise memory, knowledge and forgetfulness" (XV, 15). This is called the path of *Bhakti*.

(2) To one however who does not so identify himself with his mind and senses but at the same time finds it difficult to dissociate himself from them, it is taught that the actual doer is really the mind with the senses, the real Self being essentially non-active, and that the activities of the aspirant should be directed towards a perception of the doership in the non-self and a realisation of non-doership in the self—"Blinded by the sense of I, he thinks himself the doer of actions which are all really done by nature. The knower, however, of the truth of the distinction in qualities



and actions thinks that qualities resort to qualities and that himself remains unattached (III, 27-28). The knower of the Truth who is self-centred will think that he is not doing anything at all (V, 8)...He alone is a Seer who sees that all actions are performed only by nature and that the Self is non-active (XIII, 29). The embodied realising his transcendence over these three qualities which arise in the body becomes free from the pains of birth, death and old age and attains the Imperishable" (XIV, 20). This is the path of *Sāṅkhya* or *Jñāna*.

Śrī Krishna in distinguishing between these two paths leaves it to the aspirant to realise for himself that the Higher Being of the *Bhakti-mārga* and the non-active Self of the *Jñāna-mārga* are really but different *aspects* of one and the same Absolute Being who is essentially and absolutely free from any connection whatsoever with nature. Until such a realisation is had, Śrī Krishna is reluctant to grant the diploma of true and perfect knowledge to the aspirant. This is the highest goal.

## 2. *A Preliminary Course*

Before we consider the two paths of *Bhakti* and *Jñāna* and their goal, it is necessary to consider a preliminary course of training which is essential for the proper treading of those paths. We have seen that

the aspirant who is entering these paths still retains the sense of doership and is therefore always or sometimes identifying himself with the mind, the senses and the body which are his instruments of action. This identification will lead to his forgetting their true status so that by a little inattention on his part he may be led into various acts of omission and commission by the nature inherent in him in spite of his desire to transcend that nature. It is therefore necessary for him to train his will and acquire a stability of mind which will secure him from such lapses. This power of concentration and self-control which is thus a condition precedent to the practice aright of both *Bhakti* and *Jñāna* may be considered as secured in three stages :

(1) In the first, the mind is weaned from outside attractions.

(2) In the second, the mind is made still without any form of activity.

(3) In the third, the mind is given the Higher Being or the non-active Self for contemplation.

As the essential nature of the mind is to be ever active and as it cannot therefore remain inactive for more than a moment, the second stage is necessarily momentary; if some object of thought is not supplied to the mind immediately it will cease to be conscious and will begin to sleep. For practical purposes therefore we may omit the second stage and consider the process in two stages, the first and the third. They are respectively called *Vairāgya* and *Abhyāsa*.



3. *Vairāgya*

This *Vairāgya* is a positive attitude of turning away from sensuous objects and has therefore to be distinguished from the purely negative non-desire which was the main characteristic of Karma Yoga. Mere non-desire does not signify the eradication of the possibility of future desires. *Vairāgya*, on the other hand, aims at such an eradication. It is therefore necessary to understand first how a desire arises. It may be generally said that it arises in either of two ways :

(1) Our conception of the desirability of an object is strong enough to influence us to go about in search of it. That is, our impulsive nature impels us towards a satisfaction of that impulse and we begin to desire an object. For example, if I am told that Delhi is a very beautiful city, my inherent yearning for the particular pleasure of sight-seeing is excited and I begin to desire to see Delhi.

(2) In the second process, the impulse itself is felt only after we come in contact with the thing. That is, suppose that I have no desire at all to see Delhi but by some chance I find myself unexpectedly transported there. Even then, when I *find* that the sight of it gives me pleasure, I will learn to consider Delhi as desirable and a desire to see it again will be generated in me.

It will be seen that the distinction between these two processes of the rise of desire really lies only in the fact that in the one the desire precedes, and in the

other succeeds, the contact with the object of pleasure. Again, in the first process, the impulse precedes the particular desire; in the second, the desire as soon as exhausted by satisfaction leaves behind it a sense of desirability in the object enjoyed. If we place therefore in their natural order the stages thus :—

(1) Impulsive Yearning

(2) Active Desire

(3) Actual Enjoyment

(4) Active Desire while enjoying

(5) Resultant Impulse, the seed for future desires, the first three stages may be seen to be included in the first process and the last three in the second. We will also see that the five together form an endless cycle from which it will ordinarily be very difficult to escape.

The remedies for preventing desire from arising in either of these ways are naturally the ones appropriate to them :—

(1) In the case of desires *preceding* the contact with the object of desire, we are asked to tackle with the initial impulse or the sense of desirability and counter-act that impulse by the wilful generating of the sense of undesirability in the object contemplated. That is, as soon as we begin to consider an object desirable, we must present to ourselves the undesirable aspects of that same object. And fortunately for us, there is nothing at all in the universe around us, which has not got some undesirable aspect or other; so that by repeatedly reminding ourselves of such aspects we will



be steadily subduing our inherent impulsive nature. I may even say that we will be thereby diverting our impulsive nature towards that one object in the universe which is free from any undesirable aspect whatsoever, namely the Self.

(2) In the case of desires *succeeding* the contact with the object, we will have to prevent the desire from arising even during the time of enjoyment. That is, there must be no zest in the enjoyment. To have that attitude we will have to be very careful not to forget the undesirable aspect of the object and not to be carried away by the seeming desirable aspects.

In short, (1) Contemplation of the true and full nature of an object prevents the rise of desire to enjoy it by nipping in the bud the sense of desirability.

(2) Stability of mind while enjoying an object prevents the enjoyment from leaving behind it the sense of desirability, the seed for future desires; but it will be apparent that this latter stability of mind is almost an impossibility with the majority of aspirants.

(3) An easier method is to prevent the contact with the object itself so that there may be no occasion at all for the rise of desire as the result of that contact. In general, this method is to reduce to a minimum the number of objects with which the aspirant has any chance of coming in contact.

4. *Abhyāsa*

All these three come under the common heading of *Vairāgya* and the aspirant who has successfully passed through these stages may be said to have acquired the necessary qualifications to enable him to enter on the next step of *Abhyāsa*. The difference between *Vairāgya* and *Abhyāsa* lies in the fact that while the former aims only at steadying the mental attitude of the aspirant towards an object, the latter aims at an extinction of the perception itself of the object and a retention at the same time of the consciousness of the perceiving subject.

This extinction of the perception of the object is secured in either of two ways :—

(1) In the first, the perception is prevented by shutting off the channels of perception. This is what is called *Simple Yoga*, the Yoga of the *Yogasūtras* with its attendant requisites of sense-control, mind-control, breath-control, posture, and so on.

(2) In the second, the perception is retained but the individuality of the object perceived is made to merge in an all-pervasive universality so that we cannot say of the aspirant in this stage that he perceives a particular object at all. He need not therefore restrain or control the activities of the senses, for to him all activities and all objects of activities have no significance independent of the Universal Principle. It naturally follows that the conditions like posture, etc., required in the case



of the ordinary Yogin above-mentioned are unnecessary as regards the person who aspires at this stage. This is called *Rāja-Yoga*.

From the nature of things, it will be seen that inas-much as control of the senses and the mind *is* necessary till the aspirant realises in actual experience his inherent unrelatedness to them, even the *Rāja-Yogin* has to practise the former kind of Yoga up to a certain stage. In that view the former is a handmaid of the latter and both together form the *Abhyāsa*. By this course of training we attain supreme stability of mind; but mind, as already mentioned, is by its very nature ever active so that when we conceive of it as being also stable, we are logically postulating of it that it is active but active only in one direction. That is, the mind's activities are *all* centred round a single point whether it be the objective universal Principle which we have called the Higher Being or the Subjective Self itself; in other words there is concentration either in *Bhakti-Yoga* or in *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*.

## CHAPTER V

### GOD IN THE UNIVERSE

#### 1. *Omnipresence*

It is an accepted principle of all religions that God is omnipresent. Their conceptions and enunciations of the nature of God-head may differ but they are all unanimous in proclaiming His omnipresence. If He is then present in the All, the questions arise (1) What is the All in which He is present ? (2) What is He that is present in the All ? (3) How is He present in the All ? (4) How shall we know His presence in the All ?

Each one of these questions is immense in itself and many remain unanswered even after years of careful study. The best that we can do is an attempt to tackle these questions within our limited capacity and within the very limited time that we are able to devote to such enquiries. We shall take for our guide the Divine Song of the Lord Himself. The All or the "Universe" as it is called can be analysed into three distinct though interdependent portions for the purpose of understanding its real nature :

- (1) The individual Self in us which perceives and experiences everything else in the universe,
- (2) The objective phenomena which force themselves upon our perception and experience,
- (3) The cosmic forces which enable the Self to



perceive and experience and which bring about the objective phenomena and enable them to be perceived and experienced.

These three divisions are respectively called *Adhyātma*, *Adhibhūta* and *Adhidaivata*. God pervading as He does all these three has also to be viewed in these three aspects: (1) He is immanent in and enlivens the individual selves. "The eternal individual Self in the world of Jeevas is but a part of Myself." (XV, 7).

(2) He is immanent in and enlivens the objective world. "By Me is all this universe pervaded." (IX, 4).

(3) He is immanent in and enlivens the cosmic forces.

"See in Me the Ādityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Aświns and the Maruts." (XI, 6).

The pervasion by God of the individual selves is variously conceived of by the several schools of philosophy and the consideration of this subject may be reserved for a future occasion. We shall now therefore take up for consideration the other two kinds of pervasion on which there is not much difference of opinion though of course the dialecticians in their zest for their own methods of exposition would make it appear as if there is a vast difference. As our present object is not to quarrel with or espouse the cause of any one of them but only to understand the main principles in the light of the Lord's teachings, the internecine fights among the several schools of thought have no interest for us.

## 2. *Matter and Force*

God or Īśwara as I prefer to call him may therefore be first considered as pervading the objective world. Though it is certainly true that every atom of matter is ever incessantly active, still for practical purposes we may say of the objective world that it is two-fold. Simply because the latest scientists have enunciated that the force concentrated in a physical atom is enough to blow up the earth, I do not think we have therefrom concluded that it is dangerous to sit in a chair. Activity as known to the scientists is quite different from the one we are practically concerned with. There is therefore no harm in saying that the objective world is (1) *Bhāvātma*—Static and (2) *Kriyātma*—Dynamic.

In the former class we may include all physical matter as we understand it, *viz.*, (1) the primordial matter which is variously called *Prakriti*, *Avyakta* or *Pradhāna*,

(2) its differentiations and gross manifestations as the five primary elements and

(3) its ultimate grosser manifestations up to the state of the inert universe that we see around us.

In the latter class we may include all kinds of motion or vibration beginning from the very first disturbance in the homogeneity of that primordial matter up to the wonderful play of forces that we are now experiencing around us. Having tried to make it clear what we include in the above two classes, we propose to give



them two names for convenience of treatment. The former we shall collectively call Matter and the latter Force. In pervading the objective world therefore, Īśwara has to pervade both Matter and Force.

### 3. *Pervasion*

We shall begin with a consideration of the pervasion of Matter. Pervasion, as we ordinarily understand the term, may be of several sorts :

- (1) *Enclosing*, as a box does the things in it,
- (2) *Occupying*, as water in a brass pot,
- (3) *Shining through*, as a light may be said to pervade the dome that covers it,
- (4) *Interfusion*, as a piece of salt dissolved in water,
- (5) *Imparting existence*, just as the sun may be said to pervade his image reflected in water,
- (6) *Being the substratum* for a super-imposition, just as a rope can be said to pervade the rope-snake,
- (7) *Being the substance of*, just as mud may be said to pervade the pot that is made out of it.

Śrī Krishna anxious as He is to bring home to us the immanence of Īśwara in all possible ways deals with each one of these sorts.

### 4. *Enclosing*

*Enclosing* may be in either of two ways, according to the nature of the enclosing substance :—

(i) If it is gross matter like wood or steel as in a box, the things enclosed need not be in contact with the enclosing substance at *all* points. That is, those things need not occupy all the space enclosed. In other words, they do not exhaust the possibilities of enclosing. "He stands enclosing all" (XIII, 13), "Within whom are the beings. (VIII, 22.)

(ii) When we consider a subtler substance like darkness or light, we say here also that a thing is enclosed or wrapped in darkness, enclosed or steeped in light. Here the thing enclosed is in contact with the enclosing substance at all points, just like a man immersed in water. There is no intervening space between the thing enclosed and the substance enclosing. In the case of Īśwara, we include *all* the universe in the conception of the thing enclosed; there is therefore no need for leaving a void between the enclosing substance and the thing enclosed. Further, when we find that even air does not permit of a void in similar circumstances, we cannot postulate of the infinitely finer Īśwaric substance that *it* leaves such a void unoccupied. Śrī Krishna therefore, while enunciating that the former kind of enclosing is certainly present in Īśwara, points out also that His nature does not stop with that but envelops the universe in the latter sense also. "Know that all beings are in Me as the great Air in space ever pervades all things" (IX, 6).



### 5. *Occupation*

*Occupation.*—In the above kind of pervasion the enclosing substance is only in outer contact with the thing enclosed; that is, we cannot say of it that it is inside that thing also. An enveloping box cannot be said in any way to pervade the inside of the thing enclosed; nor can light which envelops a thing be said to pervade its inside also. The above kind of pervasion therefore is a very imperfect one as it does not concern the inside of the thing pervaded. To postulate therefore complete pervasion of the universe by Īśwara, we have to say that He is in contact with all things even on the inside of them. Here again as in the previous case the residing inside may be in either of two ways :—

(i) A jewel kept in a big iron safe is certainly in contact with the inside of the safe and may be said to occupy it. But it is not in contact with the whole of the inside as there is extra space there which can be occupied by other things. Īśwara can certainly be addressed as “O Dweller in the Universe” (XI, 37); but one who dwells in a house does not occupy the whole of it. The expression may therefore give rise to a suspicion that the inside of the universe has room for other things than Īśwara as well.

(ii) Without denying therefore the above-mentioned limited kind of occupation, we are told that the more proper view is to conceive of Īśwara as occupying the

entire inside of the universe so that every part of the universe can be in direct contact with Íśwara. "This interval between the earth and the heavens is occupied by You alone; so are all the quarters" (XI, 20).

### 6. *Shining Through*

*Shining through.*—From the two kinds of pervasion we have till now ascribed to Íśwara, we see that He envelops the universe completely from the outside and that He occupies that universe completely from the inside. That is, in the words of the Gītā, "He is outside, and inside the beings" (XIII, 15). Suppose a brass pot is completely immersed in water. It will be at once perceived that water envelops it completely on the outside and occupies it completely on the inside. Still we cannot say in truth that water pervades the pot, for though the space outside and the space inside the pot may both be filled with water, the metal which really forms the substance of the pot remains unaffected and unpermeated by the water. Pervasion outside and inside a thing is quite a different matter from pervasion of the thing itself. If we stop therefore with the two kinds of pervasion above considered, the substance of the universe will have to remain unpermeated by Íśwara. That is, Íśwara's pervasion of the universe will not be a true phenomenon but will be confined to the outside and the inside of the universe. In fact we will have to give up



our primary conception of Him as *All*-pervading. There is no need to do so, for Śrī Krishna tells us that *Iśwara* pervades the substance also. We need not take such a gross thing as a metal pot or such a gross fluid like water for our examples. If we conceive of the universe as a glass dome put on a burning light, we will see that the light envelops the space outside the dome and inside the dome and also shines *through* the dome, so that there is no space which is not permeated by the light. The dome if it is of ground glass or of porcelain will screen the light from our view and may seem to us as if it were itself the source of light, but with a better understanding we will realise that its brilliance is only a borrowed one. Similarly the universe permeated in its substance by *Iśwara* shines; and in looking at the universe we are apt to forget the light of *Iśwara* within who is really shining through it whether we recognise it or no. "The light which inheres in the Sun and enlightens all the world, the light in the Moon and the light in Fire—know that all that light is Mine" (XV, 12).

### 7. *Interfusion*

*Interfusion*.—If we look through a wire-gauze and are able to see distinctly the objects on the other side, it only means that light is able to penetrate through interstices in the netting and not that it permeates the substance of the metal wires which really make up

the gauze. So far as the metallic substance is concerned, light is only reflected *on* it. Similarly if light shines through a glass dome, it only means that it is able to pass through it or be reflected on it and not that it enters into the substance of the dome. If it had entered into the substance, it must remain there even if we remove the lamp that gave the light. The permeation is still therefore imperfect. We want a still higher kind where the permeating substance will enter into or penetrate the substance of the thing permeated. There are three ways in which this is possible.

(i) Piercing through, as a string does a necklace of pearls. "All this is threaded in Me as the precious stones in a string" (VII, 7). Here it will be seen that though the string is an essential of and goes into the composition of the necklace and therefore permeates it entirely, still the permeation is only seeming as the string occupies only the spaces of the holes in the middle of the beads and does *not* enter into the substance of the beads themselves. The string and the beads remain as distinct as ever though they merge in a common conception as a necklace.

(ii) If therefore we take up the example of a piece of cloth soaked in coloured liquid, we will be nearer our idea of permeation. The coloured liquid spreads itself not only in the interstices between the threads which make up the cloth but colours the threads themselves, so that we may say that the colour permeates even the substance of the cloth. "All this



universe is permeated by me whose form is imperceptible" (IX, 4). Still again, we know that the intermingling is not complete for if the colour is washed off the cloth is restored to its normal condition when we will realise that the permeation of the cloth by the colour was only seeming and transient and did not concern the substance of the cloth at all.

(iii) In the case of salt dissolved in water, a more complete fusion is effected. Every particle of water is saltish and we can with greater propriety say that the salt has entered the substance of the water. It has merged in, mingled with and lost itself in the water. There is not a particle of water which is not saltish. Similarly Íśwara is so "dissolved" in the universe that there can be nothing in it which is not permeated by Íśwara. "No being, animate or inanimate, exists which is without Me" (X, 39).

### 8. *Imparting Existence*

*Imparting Existence.*—In the last kind of permeation that we considered under three varieties, piercing, intermingling and fusing, we may note that the necklace, coloured cloth and salt-water exist as such because of the string, the colour and the salt respectively. If we withdraw the latter, the former will cease to exist as such; so that we may say that but for the string etc., the necklace etc., cannot exist. If therefore Íśwara withdraws himself from the universe the latter will

cease to exist as such; in fact, the existence of the universe depends on the permeation by *Iśwara*. This is certainly a correct statement of the truth but only a partial statement if we are content to ascribe to *Iśwara* only the above-mentioned kinds of permeation. For, if it is true that the necklace is a necklace because of the string, it is equally true that a necklace is a necklace because of the beads; the coloured cloth owes its existence as much to the cloth as to the colour; the salt water owes its existence as much to the water as to the salt. In fact, in these cases the thing pervaded is of equal importance with the thing pervading. If the string is withdrawn, it may be that the necklace disappears but the beads remain; the necklace disappears equally when the beads are withdrawn even though the string may remain. So in the other examples also.

Further, the fusion is not so complete that we cannot separate the two. Even while the fusion exists we are quite aware of the existence of two quite distinct and independent things though placed in the closest contact possible. The string does not *become* the beads, nor the colour the cloth, nor the salt the water; nor *vice versa*. They become indistinguishable but do not lose their individuality.

The permeation that *Śrī Krishna* ascribes to *Iśwara* is not of this limited kind. He does not grant that if *Iśwara* is withdrawn from the universe any residue of reality can be left behind, nor does He grant to the permeated universe any individuality of its own inde-



pendent of Īśwara. The passage "No being, animate or inanimate, exists which is without Me" (X, 39) is absolute in its terms though it was quoted in a limited sense in a previous context. According to Him therefore we must conceive of the permeation as a relationship wherein Īśwara and the universe will not claim equal importance and wherein the universe exists only because of Īśwara and not that Īśwara exists only because of the universe. That is, the pervaded thing is in a condition of subordinate existence to the pervader. We shall now see how this can be brought about.

First we shall take the example of reflection. The sun is seen reflected in a clear sheet of stagnant water. The image of the sun that we see there owes its origin to the sun itself; it has no independent existence of its own. It has no independent substance of its own. Well might we therefore say that it is permeated by the sun, without any fear of contradiction. But it will be noticed that the sun and the image are perceived as two distinct entities and it is only our mature knowledge that the latter is only a reflection of the former that makes us realise their identity. To one who has no idea of a reflection at all, the two will be quite distinct. Further, we see the sun high up in the heavens and the image deep down in the water; they are far apart in space. Identity of space is essential for any pervasion of one thing by another. To convey to us therefore a proper conception of the pervasion by Īśwara, this illustration

is a very inapt one though it may be useful as an example of dependent existence. It is worthy of note therefore that when dealing with the relationship of Íswara with the universe Śrī Krishna does not compare it anywhere to a case of reflection. The later thinkers however, with a view to emphasise the aspect of dependent existence, put forward this illustration and even they ought not to be understood as saying that the universe is as *unreal* as a reflected image but only that it is *real* though the reality is borrowed from Íswara.

The remaining two kinds of Pervasion will be dealt with in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

### GOD THE SUBSTANCE OF THE UNIVERSE

#### I. *The Substratum*

*Being the substance.*—To avoid the defects in our previous example, we shall consider another where the distinction between the pervading thing and the pervaded one is not so marked and where there is identity of space occupied by both of them. A man walking along the road in the dusk of the evening may mistake a lamp-post for a thief. Here the thief has no independent existence; he seems to exist only because of the lamp-post. In other words, the lamp-post lends its own existence to the thief. The thief has no substantial form of his own; the substance that may be considered as pervading and constituting his body is only that of the lamp-post. It may therefore be stated that it is the lamp-post that "pervades" the thief. In fact it pervades it so completely that it is merged and lost in the thief so much so that when the thief is perceived the lamp-post is lost sight of. The pervasion is entire and completely covers the thief from top to toe. In cases therefore of delusion or mistaken superimposition of one thing upon another, there is pervasion of the engrafted thing by the thing which is the substratum for the engrafting. So does Íswara

pervade the universe. The universe is a superimposition upon Íśwara. It has no existence independent of Íśwara. The substance that lends reality to it is only that of Íśwara. The pervasion is so complete that the identity of Íśwara seems to have been lost in the universe, for we see only the universe and not Íśwara. In the salt water, salt though completely dissolved and therefore imperceptible can still be detected by the sense of taste. But the disappearance of Íśwara in the universe is more complete, for wherever we turn we see the universe and the universe alone. If we take for granted the reality of the thief and want an answer to the question "Where is the thief?", and expect that answer to be an accurate one, the only answer possible is "The thief is in the lamp-post", a seemingly absurd answer to one who has no conception of their relative realities, and a perfectly intelligible answer to one who has such a conception. If we proceed to cross-examine our answerer and insist upon getting an answer to the further question "*In* the lamp-post, is there a thief?", he will decidedly give us the reply "No". In fact, in the course of our enquiry into the nature of that thief, we will get two consecutive answers which seem to be mutually contradictory but are in fact perfectly reconcilable and intelligible. It may even be stated that there is no other way in which the answers can be stated. "The thief is in the lamp-post" is as true a statement as the later one "There is no thief in the lamp-post." The answers are elicited



in different stages of the enquiry; and their form depends upon the form of the questions. So with Īśwara and the universe. The universe being a superimposition on Īśwara may be said to be *in* Īśwara as the thief is in the lamp-post. The universe having no independent reality of its own, we may with equal propriety say that *in* Īśwara there is no universe. This is just what the Lord says "All beings *are in* Me ....The beings *are not in* Me. Look at My Īśwaric nature" (IX, 4-5).

## 2. *Derivative Reality*

As the thief is a passing phenomenon, the questions "Wherefrom did the thief appear? Wherein does he exist? Wherein will he disappear?" are quite relevant. No such question can arise with reference to the lamp-post. To one who knows its stable real existence before him and has no reason to doubt the evidence of his senses, the question "Where *is* the lamp-post?" will not suggest itself at all. But to one who initially saw only the thief and only later on came to realise that the object before him was not a thief but a lamp-post, it may be material to get an answer to the question "Where was the lamp-post when I was seeing the thief?" The answer will be "The lamp-post was imperceptible at that time as it was merged in the thief". It will be inaccurate to say that the lamp-post was *in* the thief, for the latter having no

reality of his own cannot possibly serve as the location of any other entity, much less of one more real than himself. The lamp-post was *not* therefore in the thief but was sustaining his existence without itself being in him. Similarly, Īśwara the substratum, whereon the airy castle of the universe appears, pervades it imperceptibly and sustains it but is not *in* it, for it has no reality of its own to enable it to serve as the location for Īśwara. It is in this sense Śrī Krishna says "All this is permeated by Me by My imperceptible form. All beings are in Me but I am *not* in them...I Myself sustain the beings but am not *in them*" (IX, 4-5). This seemingly contradictory statement of the nature of Īśwara cannot be made if we understand the pervasion by Him in any of the previously mentioned kinds. It is significant and true only when we bear in mind that his pervasion is similar to that of the lamp-post in the above example. Īśwara disappears entirely from our view when we perceive the universe, as the lamp-post does when the thief is seen; similarly the universe will disappear the moment Īśwara is realised, just as the thief disappears when the lamp-post is recognised. In short, the two are mutually exclusive conceptions which cannot simultaneously exist. But, it will be noted that the lamp-post *does* exist as a matter of fact whether we recognise in it the lamp-post or seem to see in it the thief and that the thief does *not* as a matter of fact exist in the lamp-post at any time, even when we seem to see him in it. That is, of the two conceptions, one is always



real and the other always unreal. The substratum is always real and the superimposition is always unreal. The former sometimes becomes imperceptible and lends its own reality to the latter which for the moment puts on the cloak of reality; but the cloak is transient and illusory and will not bear scrutiny.

If, as above stated, the lamp-post can be said to pervade the thief by reason of the latter having no independent substance or existence of his own, a doubt may arise whether we cannot with equal propriety say that the *thief* pervades the lamp-post as that conception envelops and hides the other conception. The answer is a decided "No", for even when the thief is seen, it is the lamp-post that is actually seen by the eyes; it does not cease to be the object of vision but only the mind adds on to the vision some notional attributes and develops a thief out of them. In fact, if the lamp-post was hidden and was not the object of vision, there could be no thief at all. The lamp-post is therefore the basic fundamental fact on which a mental imaginary structure is built. Its existence is its own and does not depend upon its being pervaded by anything else. Further, the conception of a thief is a mere notional excrescence which does not exist and cannot possibly affect the real lamp-post. The mirage pool cannot for a moment wet the ground on which it is seen; nor can it be conceived of as "pervading" the ground. Having itself no existence of its own, it cannot possibly pervade any other entity, much less one more real than itself.

There is therefore no room for the alternative theory that an unreal Īśwara may have been engrafted on a real universe.

### 3. *The Substance*

*Being the substance.* — We shall now pass on to the last kind of pervasion, the 7th in our list. Before considering its nature, it will be useful to note if it is necessary at all to postulate a still higher kind of pervasion than the ones we have till now considered in an ascending series. We have secured in the previous kind of pervasion even identity of substance and identity of space between the pervading and the pervaded things. Is there still anything wanting to make the idea of pervasion complete? Pervasion presupposes the existence of two things, the pervader and the pervaded. If we want to conceive of them as being in still closer contact than what we had in the superimposition illustration, it would seem that the two things must coalesce and be only *one* and there could therefore be no "pervasion" of one thing by the other. They will be identically the same and there will be perfect equation between them. It may be true to say that the conception of an Aśwa pervades the conception of a horse; but it is a meaningless statement, for, the words Aśwa and horse being interchangeable synonymous terms, there can be no "pervasion" at all for there are no two things, the one to pervade and the other to



be pervaded. The question is therefore whether we can bring the things closer together than in the previous illustration where we have identity of substance and identity of space between them. If we consider that illustration once again for a moment, we will realise that

(1) the substance that made up the form of the thief was *not* really identical with the substance that made up the form of the pillar and in fact could never be, different as the two conceptions are,

(2) we perceived the identity of substance only by denying substantiality to the thief and tracing his seeming substantiality to the real and the only one existing substance of the pillar,

(3) the thief and the pillar were two mutually exclusive conceptions so much so that they cannot *simultaneously* be perceived, as the one disappears when the other is perceived. In other words there is no identity of time between the two, and

(4) the perception of the identity of substance or of the identity of space is really *not* a direct perception, for the identity between two things cannot be said to be directly perceived when there is no simultaneous perception of those two things; in fact the perception of identity is only an *inference after* experiencing the thief and the pillar in succession.

All these defects are absent if we conceive of the pervasion by Īśwara with reference to a different example. It needs no demonstration to bring home to us the patent fact that a gold chain is pervaded by gold.

The pervasion is entire as it extends to all the space occupied by the chain and the substance of the chain is identical with the substance of the gold. We have therefore here both the elements of identity of substance and identity of space that we had in the "thief" illustration. In addition we have, in contrast with that, these characteristics which were wanting in that illustration, *viz.*,

(1) the substance that makes up the form of the chain *is* really identical with the substance that makes up the gold, for both are only gold;

(2) it is unnecessary to deny substantiality to the chain to enable us to perceive its identity with gold; the chain may be as it is and yet we may see that it is but gold;

(3) the chain and gold are *not* mutually exclusive conceptions; the chain will not cease to be perceived when the gold is perceived, nor will the gold disappear when the chain is perceived. Both of them will *simultaneously* exist. Instead of being exclusive of each other, they are on the other hand mutually *inclusive* conceptions. We cannot conceive of a gold jewel without having at the same time a conception of the gold as well; nor can we conceive of gold in the abstract without at the same time clothing it in some definite form. The two conceptions though academically distinct are practically inseparable. In fact, if the gold chain disappears, the gold also will disappear; and if the gold disappears, the chain also will disappear. In



other words, there is identity of time as well between them.

(4) The perception of identity between the gold and the chain is a *direct* one, for both of them are simultaneously seen and not successively. There is therefore no need for any inferential conclusion in the matter.

If we take therefore that Īśwara pervades the universe as gold does the chain, we can have the universe as it is, need not deny substantiality to it and yet at the same time postulate its identity with Īśwara as a positive perceivable fact rather than a merely intellectual possibility. It is no surprise therefore that Śrī Krishna, bent as he is on bringing home to us the truth about His nature in as direct a manner as is possible and in as easy and understandable a method as the nature of the subject allows, gives prominence to this kind of pervasion. It is worthy of notice that neither of these illustrations, the thief in the pillar or the chain of gold, is mentioned in the Gītā nor even similar examples; but the illustrations are useful to convey to us a correct impression of its teachings.

#### 4. *The Chain of Gold.*

From a study of the chain of gold, we will be able to see for ourselves that

(1) the chain *is* gold even while it appears as a chain,

(2) the chain cannot exist *after* the gold is withdrawn from it, and

(3) the chain did not exist *before* it was made but the gold existed even then.

In other words, the gold existed as gold before the chain was made, exists as gold even when the chain is seen, will exist as gold even when the chain as such ceases to exist. That is, the existence of the gold extends into all the three periods of time, the past, the present and the future while the existence of the chain as such is limited to the period of its appearing as such, namely, the present; and even then it does not exist independent of the gold. It may therefore be stated that the chain owes its existence to the gold itself, that is, it has its birth out of it, exists in it and will disappear in it. Similarly we can say of the thief in the pillar that he originated in the pillar, is sustained by the pillar and will disappear in the pillar. If we take therefore either of these examples as illustrating the relation of Īśwara to the universe, we can see that it will be correct to say that the universe arises out of Īśwara, is sustained by Īśwara and will be dissolved in Īśwara. Well therefore does the Lord say "I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings" (X,20).

To return to our illustration, we saw that between the chain of gold and the gold there was complete identity of space, time and substance. These however are the only three aspects in which one thing can be differentiated from another. If identity in all these



three is present, there can remain no basis for any the slightest kind of differentiation. Still we know as a matter of fact that a chain of gold is *practically* different from gold though from the absolute and abstract standpoint of truth they may be identical. To what is the differentiation due and what is the nature of that differentiating feature? If we want to find out the distinguishing features of two things, we must catalogue separately the characteristics of those things, eliminate such of the characteristics as are common and pick out the remaining ones which are responsible for the differentiation. In considering the chain of gold example we concentrated our attention up to now on such of its aspects as secured to it non-distinction from gold. That is, we took pains to notice that there was identity between the two in the several aspects known as space, time and substance. We will now note the points of difference.

(1) Gold is present in every one of the particles that make up the chain, the "chain" is present only in the chain as a whole and not in any of the particles. If therefore the arrangement of the particles is disturbed, the existence of the gold will not be affected at all but the chain as such will disappear. It follows therefore that the identity of space occupied is not perfect.

(2) Again, as once before observed, the gold in the chain existed before it was manufactured into that particular shape, exists as long as the chain exists and

will exist even after that shape is destroyed, while the chain is but a transient phenomenon existing only while it lasts. Thus the identity of time is also only partial.

(3) Further, if the chain-ness is of the *substance* of the gold chain, as soon as that shape is destroyed the whole thing must disappear but as a matter of fact we see that only that shape disappears and that gold is left behind. In other words the chain-ness though seemingly pervading the entire chain is not really inherent in it but is confined only to that particular formation which has been given to the gold for the present. The identity of substance is also therefore not quite true.

### 5. Reality and Appearance

We can see from the above that the chain of gold may be analysed into two portions :

(1) the *gold* which (a) inheres in every one of the particles and therefore in the whole chain as well, (b) exists in all the three periods of time independently of the particular shape as a chain, and (c) forms the real substratum whereon that shape appears, and

(2) the *chain-ness* which (a) does not inhere in the particles which make up the chain but is present only in the entire chain,



(b) exists only in the present while it lasts, antecedently and subsequently merging in the gold itself, and

(c) does not enter into the substance but stops with the form.

In short, the gold is a real substantial existence, the "chain" is an unreal seeming appearance. In other words, the gold is the Reality, the chain is but a Name and a Form assumed by the gold for the occasion for practical purposes. In this context I would like to make it clear that even when the gold appears as a chain, the chain-ness does *not* appertain to the gold at all but only to the form which it has assumed for the moment. It will therefore be wrong to say that the gold has "changed" into or has been "transmuted" into a chain, for the gold is perfectly intact as ever before and has not undergone any the slightest modification as to affect its "goldness." There is therefore no room for deducing from our example any theory that *Iśwara* undergoes any change in creating, sustaining, or dissolving the universe. He is ever perfect, unchanged and unchangeable.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOD THE SOURCE OF POWER

#### I. *Potentiality*

WE have not yet done with our gold chain illustration, for we will see that it has still more lessons to teach us. Gold has inherent in it the potentiality to put on any shape or pass off in any name, as a chain, necklace, cup etc. Even when it does appear as a chain, the potentiality of the gold in it to assume the form of a necklace or a cup does not cease to exist, as that potentiality belongs to the gold itself which, as above stated, does not undergo any change at all. But a chain as such and as distinct from the gold has no such potentiality, for if a chain is transmuted into a necklace or into any other shape the chain will cease to exist. In other words and generally speaking, the Cause has inherent in it the capacity to produce innumerable effects while an Effect, considered as distinct from the cause which endures even in itself, has no such capacity. Similarly Īśwara considered as the cause of the universe has infinite power of manifestation; but the universe viewed independently of the pervasion by Īśwara has no such power. It follows from this fact that any phenomenon, the slightest vibration or change, perceived in the universe, is traceable only to this infinite capacity of



Īśwara. It is in this view that the universe is characterised as *jaḍa*, inanimate or passive. But it must be remembered at the same time that just as the gold is ever unchanged and it is only in its forms that any change can occur, so do changes occur only in the universe and never in Īśwara. In this view, all activity is only in the universe and never in Īśwara though of course the potentiality to bring about that activity belongs to Him. Viewing this fact from another aspect we may say that Īśwara is really inactive in the sense that He has in Himself no phases of activity, but at the same time is active in the sense that He is the cause of all activity in the universe. The Lord in one place says "Using my Prakṛti, I create repeatedly these beings" (IX, 8) but immediately follows it up by adding "Such activities however do not bind Me for in such activities I am unattached and am but as a looker-on" (IX, 9). The seeming inconsistency between these two statements is explained by the Lord Himself in the next stanza where He says "Prakṛti presided over by Me creates the universe, the moving and the stationary. It is because of this reason that the universe undergoes modification" (IX, 10).

## 2. *Pervasion of Force*

We have till now considered the nature of pervasion by Īśwara of the universe confining our attention only to the Matter side of the latter. We shall now

proceed to consider the Force side of the universe. We shall first have to understand how a force can be pervaded by anything. When we were dealing with matter, we had some definite tangible object to be pervaded but Force is an elusive intangible thing. How to pervade it? It would seem that our ideas of pervasion need some radical adjustment when we are dealing with Force. But it will be apparent that Force is as much defined by time, space and substance as Matter, though of course we shall have to understand the word "substance" in an appropriately modified significance. The same principles therefore which guided us in arriving at the conclusion that Īśwara as the primal cause of all Matter pervades it in all its manifestations apply to the Force aspect of the universe as well and we can say that Īśwara as the primal cause of all Force pervades it in all its manifestations. In Īśwara inheres the infinite capacity to manifest any kind of force; this potentiality is infinite and is not hampered by any limitation of Name or Form. But when once such a limitation appears and shows forth a particular manifestation of force, a different kind of force cannot be manifested there without endangering the existence of the former. We noted that gold has inherent in itself the capacity to appear as a chain, necklace or otherwise but that a chain had no such option or capacity. The same rule applies in the field of Force also. To take a concrete example, electricity considered as an abstract force has inherent in itself



the capacity to manifest itself as heat, light or motive power. But an electric light is only an electric light and cannot appear as motive power without endangering its own existence as light. That is, before electric light can be converted into motive power the particular name and form as "light" must disappear and a new name and form as "motive power" must appear without affecting in any way the identity of the underlying force which is capable of assuming both these names and forms. That underlying force is in its essence unrelated to these names and forms and is quite independent of them though but for that force these names and forms will have no significance or even existence. Electricity therefore may be said to *pervade* the particular manifestations of electric force called heat, light and motive power. The pervasion is complete in all the three aspects of space, time and substance above referred to.

1. In space, electricity is present wherever electric heat, for example, is present; electric heat cannot exist anywhere which is not pervaded by electricity.

2. In time, electricity is present whenever electric heat is perceived; the latter cannot exist when electric force is absent or withdrawn.

3. In substance, electric heat has no independent existence of its own apart from the electric force which gives it life and sustains it.

### 3. *Forces Classified*

We know nothing of the objective world either as Matter or as Force except in so far as it re-acts on our senses of perception or yields to the exercise of our faculties of action. Bearing in mind this relative aspect of the universe and assuming for the moment that we ourselves the perceivers are passive targets for the wonderful display of forces, we can form some idea of the relationship between Matter and Force. Roughly speaking, Matter is a vehicle of Force and Force is the expression of Matter. Strictly speaking, the two are inseparable but distinctive aspects of the same thing; Matter does not exist for us if it does not "force" itself on our perception and Force does not exist for us if it does not "materialise" enough to suit our senses of perception. We may therefore view Force either as an essential *attribute* of Matter or as an *activity* of Matter, according as we consider it a passive or an active concomitant of Matter. In the words of the Vedānta, it is either a *Guna* (quality) or a *kriyā* (activity), the former being the passive aspect of Force and the latter the active aspect. Technicalities apart and analysing the universe of Force in the light of the above observations, we can see that all passive Force comes under one or other of the following heads :

- (1) Vibration,
- (2) Motion,
- (3) Luminosity,



(4) Fluidity,

(5) Weight.

The corresponding active Force aspects will be

(1) Sound,

(2) Impact,

(3) Light,

(4) Wetting,

(5) Gravitation.

Matter viewed in relation to these aspects is considered as possessing the above-mentioned qualities and engaged in the above-mentioned activities and is, therefore, for facility of treatment, classified under five corresponding categories respectively called

(1) *Akāśa* "Ether,"

(2) *Vāyu*, "Air,"

(3) *Tejas*, "Light,"

(4) *Āpas*, "Water,"

(5) *Prthvī*, "Earth."

(The English words are in no sense synonymous but are used only for want of truly corresponding terms). Their re-actions on the corresponding senses of perception are as follows :

(1) *Akāśa* caught by the "Ear" yields Sound.

(2) *Vāyu* caught by the "Skin" yields Touch.

(3) *Tejas* caught by the "Eye" yields Form.

(4) *Āpas* caught by the "Tongue" yields Taste.

(5) *Prthvī* caught by the "Nose" yields Smell.

(Here again the words Ear, etc., do *not* denote the physical cartilage, etc., but the faculties which

function ordinarily through them.) The entire universe considered objectively, that is, as it is perceived by us, can therefore be reduced in terms of Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. We shall take a concrete object to illustrate each of these categories.

(1) Smell : A sweetmeat has a smell, a taste, a form, a touch and a sound.

(2) Taste : A cup of pure water has no smell, but has a taste, a form, a touch and a sound.

(3) Form : A pure flame of light has no smell, no taste, but has a form, a touch and a sound.

(4) Touch : A draught of pure air has no smell, no taste, no form, but has a touch and a sound.

(5) Sound : A mere sound has no smell, no taste, no form, no touch, but is only a sound.

It will be seen from the above that, of these categories, the range of each succeeding one is wider than that of the previous one, *e.g.*, Form exists where Taste is present and can exist also where Taste is not present. It is therefore finer and more pervading than the other. It follows that Sound or vibration is the finest and the most pervading of all. Again, Smell implies the presence of Taste, Form, Touch and Sound; Taste implies the presence of Form, Touch and Sound; and Touch implies the presence of Touch and Sound. From this also we will note that Sound is the most pervasive of all.



4. *The Pervader of Force*

We will now re-call for a moment the problem we started to solve, *viz.*, to find out the nature of the pervader of the universe of Force. It must pervade Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. If it is of the nature of Smell, it can be present only in such substances as re-act on our sense of perception as Smell and not in the others whose re-actions are different. Similarly if it is of the nature of Taste, it cannot pervade the substances reacting as Form, Touch and Sound; and if it is of the nature of Form, it cannot be present where the re-actions of Touch and Sound alone are present; and if it is of the nature of Touch, it cannot re-act as Sound alone. But if it is the nature of vibration or Sound, it can be and will be present in every one of the prior categories also. It would seem therefore that Sound is the ultimate pervader of the universe of Force and its corresponding Matter aspect, *ākāśa*, the ultimate pervader of the universe of matter. But we must remember that Sound, however subtle it may be, is still but an expression of Matter and that we are on the look-out for a pervader who can pervade Sound also. We saw that the fineness and the pervasiveness increased with the decrease in the number of qualities present. In *ākāśa*, we have the single quality of Sound left. If therefore we have to postulate a pervader of *ākāśa* also, it must be finer and more pervading than *ākāśa*. That is, it must be subtler than *ākāśa* and must

be capable of being present even where *ākāśa* is absent. In other words, even the limitation as Sound must have been discarded by it. It must in reality transcend *ākāśa* and therefore be free from and devoid of *any* quality that we know of. It must be *Nirguṇa*, quality-less. Devoid as it is of the passive aspect of Force, it has necessarily to be devoid of its active aspect also. It is therefore *niṣkriya*, activity-less, also. Devoid as it is of the active aspect of Force, it cannot re-act on our senses as Sound, etc.; it is therefore Soundless, (*aśabda*), Touch-less (*asparśa*), Formless (*arūpa*), Tasteless (*arasa*) and Smell-less (*agandha*). Consequently our corresponding sense-faculties are incapable of sensing it. It is therefore *atīndriya*, beyond the senses. Our mind, finite as it is, is incompetent by its very constitution and training to conceive of anything except in terms of the senses. Our ultimate pervader transcending as it does the senses has therefore to be *acintya*, unthinkable, also. Its existence cannot therefore be even guessed at by the mind but has to be taught to us only by the divine words of the Śruti. Once so taught, our intellect can advance arguments in support of that teaching but can never of its own accord conceive of or deduce that truth. Such a verity is *Īśvara*. In consideration of the above-mentioned negative characteristics, He is, in His essential nature, called *Avyakta*, the Unmanifest, from whom all manifestations arise and in whom they disappear (VIII, 18). But Śrī Krishna warns us at the same



time that this *Avyakta* ought not to be confounded with the higher *Avyakta*, the ultimate Brahman, the highest "Abode" of Īśwara Himself (VIII, 20-21).

Before we leave this subject of pervasion of the objective universe, a word of explanation is necessary. We have purposely refrained from defining the word "objective" but contented ourselves with the ordinary significance of the term. But strictly speaking, it is not only matter and force that re-act on our senses that are "objective"; but the senses that carry the impressions to the mind and the mind that records those impressions are equally "objective" in the sense that they are also "objects" of our experience and perception. As however it is proposed to deal with them later when taking up the *Adhyātma* aspect of the universe, we have not included them now in the *Adhibhūta*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GOD THE COSMIC POWER

#### I. *Perception Analysed*

WE shall now pass on to the *Adhidaivata* pervasion, namely the pervasion by *Iśwara* of the cosmic forces which enables us to *perceive* the objective world and enable the objective world *to be perceived*. It is necessary to explain at the outset how it is possible for the same entity to lend us the capacity to perceive, at the same time imparting to the perceived object the capacity to be perceived; it may also be necessary to explain why these two distinct capacities cannot be traced to two distinct entities. To perceive is an "active" state of consciousness; to be perceived is a "passive" state of unconsciousness. The former is an attribute of "sentient" beings and the latter of "insentient" objects. The distinction between the perceiver (*cetana*) and the perceived (*jaḍa*), the seer (*dr̥k*) and the seen (*dr̥śya*), is so marked and well-defined, that it would seem more reasonable to trace all perceiver aspects to a cosmic perceiver and all perceived aspects to a cosmic perceived. That such a possibility is not lost sight of and is in fact enunciated as a truth though not as an ultimate truth will be made clear as we proceed. But it must not be forgotten that *two* entities cannot



co-exist if they are both really cosmic. A house requires but a single wall in the middle to partition it into two distinct houses. Similarly perception being a single act is able to split asunder the universe into two. Even if we conceive of perception as a limited finite act, still the splitting up is a necessary consequence. For example, we may analyse completely the entire universe under two heads, the perceiver and the perceived; similarly the universe may be considered as consisting of the seer and the seen, or of the hearer and the heard, or of the smeller and the smelt and so on. If we understand therefore the nature of the relationship between, for example, the seer and the seen, we shall understand the relationship between the other correlatives including that between the comprehensive perceiver and perceived.

## 2. *The Enabling Powers*

If I sit in a dark room entirely shut out from light, my capacity for seeing is not in any way impaired but I cannot practically exercise that capacity. I therefore, though retaining intact the power or faculty of seeing, am not then called a seer as the action of seeing is then absent. Similarly the objects in the room retain their normal capacity to be seen but it is incapable of expression just then; they are therefore not included in the category of "seen" things, as the action of seeing

is then absent. The action of seeing is thus an event necessary to clothe me with the characteristic and name of the seer. Though I am prepared to see and the objects are ready to be seen, a connecting link between the two is necessary in the form of the action of seeing. To bring about this action of seeing it is not necessary that I should move from my place or that the objects should move from theirs. No activity in the sense of motion is required at all. All that is required is a medium wherein my capacity to see and the capacity of the objects to be seen can find expression. If you fill the room with noise, air, water, smell or other concrete substance, you will not be helping me at all to see. The medium that is required is none of these sorts, as none of them have any influence on the particular kind of perception that we want, namely, vision. What we want therefore is Light, and Light only. Once it is supplied, I instantaneously see and the objects are seen. Light then is the Enabling Power whereby the respective capacities of myself and the object find expression. In other words, Light imparts sight to me and form to the objects. But for its presence there will be no sight in me nor form in the objects. Applying the same principle to every kind of visual perception and generalising on the cosmic standard, we can deduce the existence of a cosmic Light Power which enables everybody in the universe to see and everything in the universe to be seen. It is called *Aditya*. Its presence is most patent to us in the solar orb, the moon, the stars and fire.



but its essential nature ought not to be confused with the latter which are but particular instances of its manifestation.

Similarly for every other kind of perception there is a corresponding Enabling Cosmic Power. The Smell Cosmic Power is called *Prithvī*; the Taste Cosmic Power is *Varuna*; the Touch Cosmic Power is *Vāyu*; the Sound Cosmic Power is the eightfold *Dik*. Similarly every kind of force or power in the universe is conceived of as owing its existence to a corresponding cosmic force; for example, the cosmic Grasping Force is given the name of Indra, the cosmic Time Power is *Yama*, the cosmic Speech Power is *Saraswatī* and so on. As the variety of activities in the universe is naturally unlimited, the corresponding cosmic forces are also infinite in number; but, as their cosmic nature relates only to that particular kind of activity with which they are concerned, they are mutually exclusive and cannot therefore be cosmic in the full sense of that term.

### 3. *The Infinite Power*

Īśvara pervading as he does all these cosmic forces gives them existence, life and sustenance. They exist in and because of Him. "O Lord, I see in Thy body all the Gods" (XI, 15). It is Īśvara alone that shines forth in these. "Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Soma, Brahmā and Vishnu—all these are Thyself" (XI, 39).

“That light in the Sun which illumines all the world, the light in the moon and the light in Fire — know all that light to be Mine. Pervading the Earth, I support all beings by My Prowess; becoming Soma, the Juice Power, I nourish all plants; becoming the Gastric Fire and residing in the body of living beings, aided by *Prāṇa* and *Apāna*, I digest the four kinds of Food” (XV, 12-14).

Again, these cosmic Forces, limited as their scopes are to particular varieties of activity, can all be conceived of as limited manifestations of a comprehensive cosmic Power, just as we saw that heat, light and motive power can be conceived of as particular manifestations of the comprehensive Force called electricity. As such comprehensive cosmic Power is by our hypothesis conceived of as transcending the particular modes of practical expression, it is merely Power, undefined, unlimited and infinite. It is the source from which all the varieties of power and activity derive their life. As we have now discarded the distinctions which prevail among the particular manifestations of power and have arrived at a conception of power in the abstract, there can be no room for variety therein. It is therefore One and One only. *Māyā* is the name given to it. It is free from the characteristics of the manifested universe and is in fact nearest to the essential nature of God; but the potentiality to find expression in manifestation is inherent in *Māyā*, and this causal character is sufficient to impart objectivity to it. It is



also therefore pervaded by Íswara. It is Íswara that gives it life and substance. He is its Lord. "This My Māyā" He says (VII, 14). We shall have occasion to say more about Māyā later on; we referred to it in this context only in its aspect as Infinite Cosmic Force.

## CHAPTER IX

### IS GOD PERCEIVABLE ?

#### I. *Why is God not Perceived ?*

WE have thus seen that Īśwara pervades the universe of Matter by being its causal substance as gold is of the gold chain and that He pervades the universe of Force by being the primal source of all power as electricity is of electric heat, etc. We pointed out while considering the gold chain example that the pervasion by gold of the chain is not a matter of mere inferential knowledge but is one of direct perception. The question now before us is, do we perceive Īśwara in the universe as an object of direct perception as we perceive the gold in the gold chain ? If we do, why all this enquiry ? If we do not, the gold-like pervasion which we attributed to Īśwara cannot be a fact. The only patent and possible solution to this dilemma is the double-headed answer. "We do and we do not". That is, as a matter of fact, we *are* every moment perceiving Īśwara in the universe but are not conscious of that fact. Is such a position possible ? — will be the subject next for consideration.

Here again we shall consider a familiar example. Suppose that we are witnessing a cinema play when a most pathetic scene is being depicted on the screen. All the persons who are sitting there are facing the



white screen before them and are actually visualising it; but is there anybody among them who has any thought of the screen when he is absorbed in the story depicted on it ? His sympathy and attention is all for the figures that move on it and he is for the moment quite unconscious that those figures are but seeming nothings and cannot even "seem" if there was not the screen behind them ? That is, in his absorption in the figures, he is unconscious of the screen though as a matter of fact he *is* seeing the screen. Again when a man sees his beloved, he *does* see her flesh-and-blood body but charmed by her beauty of form he is unconscious for the moment that that form is of flesh and blood. Similarly in every example of perception that we may take, we will see that once our mind's attention is riveted on the form side of the things we will be unconscious for the moment of their substance side, though the substance is as much perceived by us as the form and though as a matter of fact the form cannot be perceived independently of the substance. So in the universe. We are so engrossed with the form side of the universe that we are unconscious of Īśwara, the "substance" of the universe, though as a matter of fact Īśwara *is* perceived by us when we perceive the universe and though in fact the universe cannot be perceived by us independently of Īśwara. Our attention to the phenomenal side of the universe sufficiently accounts therefore for the non-perception of the ever-present Īśwara in it.

2. *A Truer Explanation*

But there is another and a more accurately true explanation for our not perceiving Īśwara in the universe of forms. And that is, Īśwara is not perceivable at all. He is imperceptible not in the sense in which alone we used that term in a prior context *viz.*, that He is beyond the reach of the senses of perception. A mountain in America may be in that sense imperceptible to me as being beyond the reach of my senses of perception; so may be an inhabitant of the spirit world. But in either of these cases, the imperceptibility is only relative as it will disappear if I go to America or develop the higher sense of seeing the spirit world as the case may be. The imperceptibility is traceable in these instances to the defects in, or the immaturity of, the instruments of perception. A star which is imperceptible to me will become perceptible if I seek the aid of a telescope. Īśwara's imperceptibility is *not* of this sort. It is not due to distance, defect of the eye or other similar causes that are to be found in the media of perception. The imperceptibility of Īśwara is absolute and has no relation at all to those media. He is imperceptible not because the power of perception in us is not strong or that there is any impediment in our way of perceiving Him, but only because He is by His own nature incapable of being perceived. In other words, "to be perceived" is not a characteristic of His. As I have once before observed, there are only



two categories of things, the perceiver and the perceived. If Īśwara therefore is by His very nature incapable of being perceived, the only natural conclusion will be that He belongs to the category of the perceiver. It is impossible to perceive the perceiver. For, if it were possible, He will be a perceived and not a perceiver. Īśwara's identity with the perceiver element is not a subject germane to our present topic wherein we confine ourselves to a conception of Him as a universal Objective Principle and will be more appropriately considered when we discuss later on His pervasion of the subjective element also in the universe. We mentioned this in this connection only to emphasise on the imperceptible nature of Īśwara.

### 3. *When Perceivable ?*

If then the ever present Īśwara is imperceptible to us either (1) because we are engrossed in the form-side of the universe or (2) because Īśwara is really a perceiver and never a perceived, how are we to realise in direct experience the existence of such an entity ? The difficulty is, our senses of perception including our mind are incapable of perceiving anything other than the form side of the universe; if therefore they are weaned away from it, there is nothing for them to perceive and they will lapse into inaction or sleep. Similarly Īśwara being essentially incapable of *being* perceived will lapse from His essential nature if He

becomes perceived. A reconciliation is therefore necessary between these two extreme positions to enable Īśwara to be perceived. We must discard the form side as much as we possibly can and stop short of the total annihilation of it. Īśwara must descend from His true nature ever so little and assume a form ever so fine. We may mention that these two things necessitate corresponding courses of training in us. The former *viz.*, the discarding of the form side requires in us two qualifications, first, the discrimination between the form side and the substance side of things and secondly, the ability to keep ourselves unattracted or unaffected by the form side. These are respectively called *Viveka* and *Vairāgya*. Then the further course of training which can enable us to perceive the form which Īśwara has to assume for our benefit must be adopted for refining and perfecting of our faculty of perception to the utmost extent possible. This is *Abhyāsa* consisting of the several kinds of training and regulating the mind and the senses which are collectively called *Śamādishatka*. The intense desire to perceive Īśwara is the primary basic motive for undergoing all this training and goes by the name of *Mumukṣā* or desire for liberation which for our present purpose we confine to liberation from the ignorance of the universal Self and its results. If I want to make myself heard by a deaf friend of mine, I have to raise my voice and he has also to strain his ears. Assuming that he does hear me, if I raise my voice still higher, his



strain will be less; if I raise my voice still higher, his strain will be less still. Similarly his strain will increase as I go on lowering the pitch of my voice. That is, the intensity or grossness of my voice varies directly as his incapacity to hear or, which is the same thing, varies inversely as his capacity to hear. By the same reasoning we can arrive at the result that the grossness of the form which Īśwara has to assume for being experienced by us varies directly as the incapacity in our powers of perception or varies inversely as their capacity to perceive Him. Infinite are the gradations in our powers of perception. Infinite therefore are the forms which the Lord assumes to enable us to perceive Him. But, in assuming any form and more so in assuming grosser forms, He has necessarily to subordinate His essential nature which is imperceptible. The grosser the form therefore that He takes, the more imperfect is our perception of His true nature. Similarly, the higher the refinement and purification of our power of perception, the finer and truer is His form presented to us and the nearer are we to a perfect realisation of His true nature. As more than once observed before, all forms in the universe are His and He is the underlying Reality who has assumed these forms. Every form therefore perceivable in the universe has, and cannot but have, that Reality inherent in itself. As the gold remained gold and did not partake of the chain-ness even when it took on the form of a chain, so does the Lord remain in His true essence and does not partake of the form even

when He takes on that form. All forms however, having no substantiality of their own, have their existence only in Him the Reality underlying them all. "Know that all beings are only from Me, whether they are *Sāttwika*, *Rājasa* or *Tāmasa*. But I am not in them. They are in Me" (VII, 12).



## CHAPTER X

### THE FORMS OF GOD

#### 1. *The Need for Forms*

IT would seem from what we have hitherto stated that the perception of Īśwara is not a difficult matter at all, for the universe consisting of the forms which He has taken up is ever before us ready for being perceived by us. This is certainly so. But the real difficulty is not in perceiving the universe which is the finite expression of the Infinite Lord but in perceiving that universe *as* such an expression of the Lord. The most ignorant child may *see* a gold chain but to perceive that it is but a transient form which the underlying gold has taken for the moment requires some thought and training. The aim of our religion is to supply that thought and training to us to enable us to perceive the gold-like Īśwara in the universe of forms. If a cloth is woven in silk and cotton thread, at first sight it will be difficult to notice that two varieties of thread have been used; it will be more patent at the ends where the threads are bare. It will become patent also even in the middle of the cloth if we separate the threads. Similarly Īśwara and the universe conceived for the present as distinct are interwoven. At first sight Īśwara's existence there may not be felt. But at some portions of the universe where the interweaving

is not so close, His distinct existence may be felt and even in the thick of the universe we may feel His presence if we are able to differentiate between Him and the universe. Again, a live wire carrying the electric current generated by the dynamo to the bulb is to all appearances nothing but a wire. The electricity in it though present is quite imperceptible till it finds expression in the bulb in the form of light. Electricity is present both in the wire and in the bulb. But its presence in the former is not visible and in the latter is. All the same, if an object capable of being affected by the current comes into contact with the wire, the electricity will at once find expression. Similarly Īśwara is present in every particle of the universe, but His presence is felt in varying degrees. In some things He is seen to be more patent than in others. To one who cannot conceive of a formless electric current, the electric light has to be shown as electricity, though the light itself is but a limited expression of electricity. To those then who are unable to feel the presence of the Īśwaric current in the universe some special forms wherein it finds expression have to be pointed out as Īśwara. Arjuna therefore realising full well our limitations asks of the Lord, "I believe as true all this that You are telling me. O Lord, neither the Devas nor the Dānavas know about Your nature (X, 14). Please tell me therefore all Your divine manifestations, finding expression in which You stand pervading these worlds. How shall I know or recognise You, contemplating



always on You ? In which and what forms are You, O Lord, conceivable by me ?” (X, 16-17). Śrī Krishna characteristically answers “I shall certainly tell you My divine manifestations but only the most patent among them, for there is no limit to the number of My manifestations (X, 19). I am the Self residing in the heart of all things, I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings (X, 20). The seed of all things is Myself. Movable, or immovable, that which is without Me cannot exist (X, 39)”. Stating the truth in this way, He proceeds to enumerate the places wherein He finds patent expression to enable the aspirants to recognise His presence. He does not mean thereby that He is absent in the other things of the universe; it is just to avoid this hasty conclusion that He at the beginning and also at the end of His answer draws pointed attention to His all-pervasive nature.

## 2. *Special Forms*

We have in another context mentioned that “smell” is the individual and essential characteristic of “earth” and that in fact if Pṛthvī loses this characteristic of smell it ceases to be Pṛthvī also. Īśwara therefore is the smell in Pṛthvī, not that He has undergone any transmutation into the quality known as smell, but that His presence is perceivable in the qualified form of smell in Pṛthvī. To an aspirant who knows Pṛthvī, the conception of smell as an essential

attribute or rather as the essence itself of Pṛthvī is not very difficult to arrive at. If he cannot analyse Pṛthvī beyond the smell stage, the smell will seem the underlying Reality in Pṛthvī. The Lord says that He is that smell (VII, 9). If the aspirant is able to conceive of a deeper and finer Reality underlying the smell itself, to him the Lord says that He is that deeper and finer Reality. Similarly, He proclaims that He is the Taste in the waters (VII, 8) the Luminosity in fire (VII, 9) Sound in ether (VII, 8) and so on. Again our preconceived notions of what Īśwara will look like will stand very much in the way of our recognising His presence in the forms before us. We might have conceived of Him as an entity clothed in effulgent brilliance. There are such brilliant objects in the universe and the Lord says that He is present in them in the form of Brightness (VII, 8). Even among the bright objects like the sun, the moon and the stars, the radiant beauty of the sun may conform to our conception of Īśwaric brilliance more than the brightness of other celestial bodies. The Lord therefore says that He the Īśwara is the radiant Sun among the celestial luminaries (X, 21). That is, "if you want to find Me out, seek Me in all radiant objects; if you are unable to conceive of an entity which can at the same time give brilliance to the sun, the moon and the stars, seek Me in the sun the most brilliant of them". Similarly, "I am present in all animals; if you want to realise My presence even among them, know that I am very patently present in the Lion,



the strongest and the noblest of that class" (X, 30). In the same way the Lord goes on enumerating where-  
all His presence can be keenly and swiftly felt in the  
midst of the ever so many beings and things in the  
universe and sums up by laying down a comprehensive  
proposition that His presence can be felt in all things,  
whatever they be, possessing any kind of grandeur,  
prowess or brilliance (X, 35). If the Gāyatrī is the most  
potent among mantras, He is that Gāyatrī (X, 31).  
If Arjuna is the most valiant among the Pāndavas,  
He is that Arjuna (X, 37). If gambling is the most  
ruinous among deceits, the Lord claims to be that  
gambling Himself (X, 36). And so on and so on. Śrī  
Krishna in His divine mercy is anxious to bring home  
to us the eternal truth that He is ever present before  
us wherever we may turn our eyes or attention to;  
and even to those who are through ignorance blind to  
this patent fact, He is so insistently present in the  
objects enumerated that even those blind people  
cannot but be aware of that presence. As the electric  
light where electric power is patently visible has to be  
pointed out as electricity to one who cannot have any  
conception of it as formless, so does the Lord point out  
to us the forms wherein He is patently perceivable,  
quite secure in the conviction that, once we perceive  
His presence ever so imperfectly in those forms, He  
can easily persuade us to gradually lose sight of the  
forms in the progressive realisation of the presence  
within. To a young boy who has not seen an electric

light before, we have to show a burning bulb hanging under a reflecting shade. If he is intelligent, he will know at once that the overhanging shade is no part of the light though our finger may include that also in the pointing out. If he is more intelligent, he will know immediately that even the glass bulb is but a covering or receptacle for the light and that the light is only in the carbon or metal wire within. Suppose he happens to see in another house the next day a similar light. He will at once recognise it as electric light. He will know that the particular bulb and the particular wire that he saw else-where the previous day are not *essential* for the phenomenon of light, for he saw light to-day without that bulb and that wire but with a different bulb and a different wire. So that from this day onwards his conception of electric light will be an abstract one unrelated to any particular bulb or wire. Nor will the oval shape of the light seen on the former day or the spiral shape seen the next day influence his conception of light. That is, his conception will have transcended the forms. So does the Lord expect us to transcend the forms which limit His presence and arrive gradually at a stage where we can conceive of Him as the Unlimited Formless Absolute Being.

### 3. *God in Special Forms*

It must be clear from what we have stated above that Īśwara, inasmuch as He Himself points out the forms



in which He is more patently perceivable than in others, *is* vividly present in them. The ordinary mind steeped as it is in ignorance has therefore some justification if it clothes that form itself with the attributes of Īśwara; Īśwara present as He ever is even in that form cannot refuse to show Himself there. He therefore imparts to that form such of His attributes as can be shown forth in that form. The ignorant devotee perceiving these Īśwaric attributes in the favourite form before him naturally mistakes it for Īśwara Himself. The position of Īśwara then becomes a somewhat delicate one. The devotee before Him knows of no Īśwara other than the form with which he is familiar; if the Lord therefore chooses to tell him that that form is not Īśwara, He will either be not believed or will be wantonly driving the devotee to the conclusion that there is no Īśwara at all. If the Lord however chooses to make Himself felt even in that form, He will preserve the faith and increase the devotion of the aspirant and may eventually lead him on to higher truths. As the latter alternative is the safest in the interests of the aspirants, the Lord reiterates His presence in all forms and points out at the same time that all devotion seemingly addressed to those forms are in reality addressed to Himself (IX, 23) though the devotees are not aware of it (IX, 24) and that it is He Himself that rewards them though seemingly the rewards reach the devotees through the media of those forms (VII, 22). He only pities their ignorance of the eternal truth that *He* is the Reality

standing behind those forms and that it is *He* that is the real rewarder. A man ignorant of the nature of water-supply in a town will be surprised to find that the mere turning of a tap is sufficient to give him the water that he needs. He will stand in amazement before it and may thank the small tap for all the water that comes out of it. He will be quite oblivious of the fact that the tap is only the medium for the flow of water and that the thanks, if any, are really due to the huge reservoir of water at the outskirts of the town. The reservoir will, if it can, merely smile at the ignorance of the man but continue to supply him water through that very tap for he knows of no other source of supply. Similarly, those who have not yet had any conception of the unbounded reservoir of Love and Power which goes by the name of *Īśwara* will have recourse to the tap-like lesser powers for the quenching of their desires. To one, however, who has no other desire left than to take a cooling plunge into that reservoir, the taps are meaningless, insufficient and unnecessary. "Those whose knowledge has been pilfered by particular desires seek other Gods with special rites, impelled thereto by their own innate nature. Whatever form a particular devotee may with faith desire to worship, I endow him with unshaken faith even in that form. Endowed with such faith he worships that form and gets through that very form his desires fulfilled though ordained only by Me. But, in the case of these who have little brains, the result is but fleeting. The worshippers



of the Gods attain the Gods and a devotee of Myself attains even Me" (VII, 20-23). The Lord's point is that the trouble of worshipping is the same in both the cases. Why does the devotee content himself with transient benefits by attaching himself to ephemeral forms, while he can without any additional trouble aspire to the permanent bliss by attaching himself to the underlying Reality behind all forms ? The answer to this question lies in the patent fact that while the forms appear to be practically conceivable and realisable, the underlying Reality seems to be a mere intellectual abstraction. It is just to remove this universal misapprehension that the Lord insists on the fact of His abiding in all things as a matter of incontrovertible fact and denies that He is but an abstraction. At the same time He cannot ignore the existence of this misapprehension in the minds of all and explains it by saying "I am not patent to all, screened as I am by My Yoga Māyā. The world blinded by it cannot recognise Me the Unborn and the Imperishable" (VII, 25). What this Māyā is and how it screens Him and how it blinds the world are matters which will be dealt with in another context.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

#### I. *The Descent of God*

WE have stated above that the all-pervading Īśwara is more patently present in some forms than in others. It may also happen that He is more patently present under certain conditions than under others. We are normally aware of electricity only in its ordinary forms as electric light, etc. Every cloud, carrying moisture as it does, is charged with electricity though we are not aware of it. Under some atmospheric conditions two clouds charged with positive and negative electricity may come into contact with each other resulting in a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. This is a special manifestation of magnetic force and is of rare occurrence. When it does occur, it is a very forcible and powerful phenomenon. Even this does not happen haphazard but is subject to natural laws. It cannot happen unless there are two clouds of different sorts; it cannot happen unless there are some defined atmospheric conditions; the atmospheric conditions themselves are not mere vagaries but are the natural consequences of the world forces including even the activities of the remote sun spots and perhaps of the stars as well.

No phenomenon happens in this world unrelated to other things in the universe. Similarly due to



natural causes, certain world conditions may obtain at a particular time when two opposite kinds of force may come into dangerous contact with each other and result in an explosion and a flash. Īśwara's presence will be keenly and forcibly felt in that explosion and flash. Such a manifestation brought about by the world conditions is called an Avatāra. The two opposite kinds of forces which come into conflict with each other and thereby occasion the Avatāra are called Dharma and Adharma. The Lord therefore says "Whenever Dharma fades and Adharma rises up, then I manifest Myself. In every cycle of time I manifest Myself for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers and for the establishment of Dharma" (IV, 7-8).

It may be asked whether the conflict between Dharma and Adharma is not of everyday occurrence and whether the protection of the good etc. is not a daily concern of Īśwara. It certainly is so, for irrespective of Avatāras He assures us that He is daily looking after the good and is condemning the evil-doers. "I bear the burden of looking after the welfare of those people who are ever centred in Me and worship Me ever contemplating on Me as without a second" (IX, 22). "I am ever condemning those worst of men who hate Me and inflict pain and are devoid of good conduct to miserable births" (XVI, 19). But these daily requirements do not need the presence of a special Avatāra. The normal presence of the Lord in

the universe is sufficient for this purpose; even if there is some acute conflict somewhere He will make Himself felt there somewhat more keenly than elsewhere but it is not necessary that His power should be specially manifested in a particular form, patent to all. It is quite a fact that when two tiny clouds of the right sort collide, an electric spark is formed but we are not aware of all such sparks. It is only when the spark assumes the terrible form of a flash of lightning that we notice it. It may therefore be that Īśwara is manifesting Himself daily in ever so many ways and in ever so many forms but we do not become aware of them, nor can they be called Avatāras. As stated before, the right view is to look at all forms as the manifestations of the Īśwaric Reality; if we are able to attain that state of perception we can see Īśwara everywhere. The wrong view is to look at the forms themselves as the Reality; if we are unable to discard this view, we cannot see Īśwara anywhere; even the Avatāras wherein He most patently manifests Himself will be but *forms* though somewhat out of the normal. "Though I am never born and never decay and though I am the Lord of all beings, I using My nature create Myself by My own power (IV, 6). The unthinking do not realise My supreme imperishable highest state and think that I the formless have become the form (VII, 24). The ignorant ignore Me when I am embodied in this human form; they do not know of My highest state, the supreme Lord of all beings (IX, 11)." Even Arjuna who had moved so intimately



with the Lord in His Avatāra as Śrī Krishna could not understand His statement that *He* taught the Yoga to Vivasvān who passed it on to Manu the progenitor of Man. He cannot help asking "Your birth is but recent while Vivasvān was born long ago. How am I to understand Your statement that *You* taught him at the beginning?" (IV, 4). Śrī Krishna told him in reply that He had taken innumerable forms before. But, for the matter of that, so had Arjuna. Wherein then lies the difference between them? The Lord answers: "I know all of them (the forms taken by Myself and the forms taken by you). You however do not" (IV, 5). It is only after Arjuna has a vision of the universe-form shown by Śrī Krishna that he fully realises His Īśwaric nature. He stands aghast at recollecting the familiarity with which he treated the Lord before and hastens to apologise. "Without knowing this Your greatness and thinking that You were but a mate of mine I have addressed You familiarly as Krishna, as Yādava and as a friend either through inadvertence or through affection. While playing or lying down or sitting or dining, while alone or with others, I have sportively treated You with disrespect. I appeal to You the Incomprehensible to forgive me for all this" (XI, 41-42). But here again we may notice that Arjuna apologises only for the disrespect which he might have shown to the Īśwara as embodied in the form called Krishna. Even after this sacred teaching and after this divine vision he does not grasp the supreme

truth that *all* bodies are the Lord's and that he must apologise not only for the disrespect shown to the particular manifestation called Krishna but to every form that exists in the universe for each one of them is a manifestation of the Lord. His realisation of God-head stops therefore with the form of Śrī Krishna though the Lord Himself took the trouble of spreading before his vision the universe-pervading form of His. We mention this to point out that inasmuch as the perception of the God-head in all things is not had even by Arjuna when he had the rare fortune of being born in an age when the Lord took an Avatāra, of being in daily and intimate companionship with Him, of being instructed in the divine truth by the Lord Himself and of being even visually shown the Divine all-pervading Form of His, how much more difficult it will be for us to perceive the true all-pervasive nature of Īśwara. It is apparently an impossible task.

## 2. *Bhakti*

Is there no way then to realise the presence of Īśwara in the universe? The Lord Himself gives the answer. "One can know Me by Bhakti, how extensive I really am and who I really am" (XVIII, 55). What then is this Bhakti whereby we can in direct experience realise the presence, the nature and the "dimensions" of Īśwara. Bhakti is devotion, in English. Devotion is conceived of in four stages. As Īśwara the object of devotion



is not before us and is not likely to be before us till at the end of the course of training, we must have, first, intense faith in the fact of His existence, secondly, earnest desire to realise Him, thirdly, persistent effort at such realisation and, fourthly, loving attachment towards Him after such realisation. The last, *viz.*, love *after* the realisation of Īśwara is not, strictly speaking, dependent on any mental or conscious act of ours for the ever attractive nature of the Lord Himself will generate and maintain that love in us once we visualise Him. It is therefore more a result of the training than a part of the training course. It goes therefore by the name of *Sādhya* Bhakti or Resultant Devotion while the former three collectively are called *Sādhana* Bhakti or Instrumental Devotion. Starting as we do from the stage of ignorance or non-perception of Īśwara, we have necessarily to depend upon others for informing us that such an entity exists and for telling us the methods by which we can attain perception of Him. For that teaching and information to be correct and true, it must come either from Īśwara Himself who certainly knows His own existence and also the method of realising it or from persons who have themselves directly experienced the existence of Īśwara and personally followed the method and found it true and efficient to take us on to the goal in view. As regards the latter, the question will arise, how did *they* know about Īśwara and who taught *them* that method? We may pursue this enquiry further but will

not get any conclusive answer unless we grant that "at the beginning", whenever it was, there was a Person who knew Īśwara of his own accord and did not require any teaching from anybody else, nor any training to acquire that knowledge. That is, we must assume a person who is self-knowing and whose knowledge is unborn and ever perfect. Such a person can be only Īśwara Himself. Either way therefore we have to derive from Īśwara Himself, either from His own words as recorded in the Śruti or derivatively through the Seers who have realised Him, the information about His existence and about the means of perceiving Him. "I myself am the lesson taught by all the Vedas. I myself am the teacher of Vedānta. I myself understand the Vedas" (XV, 15). "He who neglects the Sāstras and acts according to his own will and pleasure does not attain perfection nor happiness nor the supreme goal. The Sāstra therefore is the proper guide to teach you what must be done and what must not be done. Know therefore what is prescribed by the Sāstra and then act accordingly" (XVI, 23-24).

### 3. *Three Stages*

Then, our desire to visualise Īśwara cannot be intense if it is co-existent with any desire for any other object. It must be unpolluted and one-pointed. Even to look at a bird sitting on a tree covered with dense foliage,



we have to shut our eyes to the cooling and attractive green leaves and direct them with some strain towards the distant speck which represents the bird. To grasp at the meaning of a sentence before us, we have, for the moment at least, to forget the dear children that cling to our knees. To solve a mathematical problem, we have to forget the distracting surroundings in the midst of which we are seated. If we allow ourselves to be distracted by the foliage, the children or the surroundings, as the case may be, we cannot attain the object in view. If even these small things require a turning away from the distractions, how much more so will the quest after Īśwara require? We must be careful enough to see that our senses and our mind are not attracted by the things of the world. In short, we must first learn to wean our attention away from objects that stand in the way of our perceiving Īśwara.

It may be that we are able to keep out the attractions, but the mind, accustomed as it has been hitherto only to dwell on them, may for a moment seem blank and then lapse into inactivity or sleep. It is not sufficient therefore if we turn our mind away from other things but we must also repeatedly urge it towards Īśwara. The mere non-perceiving of the foliage will not show us the bird. We must concentrate on the small speck till it yields to us clearly the form of the bird. The mere ignoring of the children will not enable us to understand the sentence; we must think deeply of it till it yields its meaning to us. The mere shutting ourselves alone

in a room will not solve our mathematical problem; we must try at it till we get the solution. In other words earnest unpolluted desire to realise Īśwara must be followed by earnest one-pointed effort.

These three stages of Bhakti and their resultant bliss are spoken of by Śrī Krishna in a beautiful couplet wherein He says "*He attains knowledge who is endowed with faith, is able to control his senses, and is one-pointed. Attaining that knowledge he before long reaches the supreme Peace*" (IV, 39). We need hardly point out that these four stages are necessary in every kind of earnest endeavour. They are more so in the paths of Bhakti and *jñāna*, the highest kinds of endeavours known to man.

#### 4. *Concentration*

In this connection a word of explanation seems necessary. We started with the intention of perceiving Īśwara in the manifold universe. But as a means thereto we mentioned that *one-pointed* effort was necessary. Īśwara is not like the solitary bird perched on a tree; He is as much the foliage as He is the bird itself. It would seem therefore that in order to obtain a correct perception of Īśwara we must really *widen* our vision so as to include the whole universe therein, rather than concentrate our attention on a single point in that universe. But it will be obvious to everybody that the former method of widening the vision is a physical



impossibility, both because of our own limited powers of perception and because of the infinite number of objects that comprise the universe. Īśwara again is present not only in the universe now before us; He has been in this universe from time beginningless and will be in it till time endless. Unless therefore we are able to include in our vision not only all the present but all the past and all the future as well, we cannot comprehend even the universe. Then, as we have stated above in another context, Īśwara is not exhausted by the universe, so that even if we have such an unlimited wide vision of the universe that is, that has been and that will be, even then our perception of Īśwara will be but an imperfect one for the Lord says "I stand pervading all this universe by a *part* of Myself" (X, 42). Further, as a general rule, no knowledge can be ever obtained by widening the range of vision. It is concentration and concentration alone that is required. A person who is gazing with wonder at a myriad electric lights shining before him will never know what electricity is and how it finds expression as light. He must withdraw his eyes from the many and sit down and concentrate on and analyse *one* of such lights. In the process of analysis his eyes must not wander to the other lights but must confine themselves only to the light before him. He will gradually learn the truth about it. After learning the truth, there is no harm if his eyes wander to the other lights for there also he will be able to recognise the truth. Till then

he must confine his attention only to a single light. The process of arriving at the truth by a concentrated attention bestowed on a single light is so wonderful that, as soon as he attains to a conception of electric force that expresses itself through that light, his conception is strangely free from the limitations that are incidental to that light; if it were not so free, he cannot recognise the presence of electricity in any other light. That is, though the process begins with concentration on a particular form, it ends in a perception of the formless force within. But between the beginning and the end there are various gradations. A man may stop short his concentration at the rose-coloured bulb itself, so that his idea of electricity will be a bulb of the particular colour and shape that he has seen. As his conception has not reached any higher level, he will vehemently denounce the statement of another person whose perceptive capacity is no better than his but who has seen a blue bulb of a different shape. Each of them is quite correct so far as their conceptions go and each of them will be perfectly justified in his sincere and vehement condemnation of the other. It is only that one who is able to conceive of electricity apart from the blueness or rosiness of the bulb that can be free from such squabbles. He will be able to sympathise with their respective attitudes and if he is a real friend of theirs he will ask each one of them to stick to his favourite form and seek and find the truth even there. He must not confuse him by placing a different or even



a more efficient form before him. Īśwara our supreme friend strengthens therefore the faith that we may have in a particular manifestation of His and that is *His* way of guiding us to the truth (VII, 21). The Lord's direction to the knowers of the truth not to disturb the faith of those who are yet in the Path of Action and even to engage themselves in the activities which those others are engaged in (III, 26) is equally applicable in the field of Bhakti. So what we have to begin with, and to stick to, till the final illumination is devotion, one-pointed devotion, to a particular form wherein Īśwara manifests Himself.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PERCEPTION OF GOD

#### 1. *The Integrity of God*

It follows from what we have stated above that inasmuch as Īśwara is present in every particle of the universe, every such particle can be taken as useful for the process of contemplation and ultimate realisation of the Īśwara therein. This is certainly logically and strictly true. It may be true that the sun is reflected in the walls, the trees and every other thing which he illuminates for unless he is reflected in them we cannot see them at all; all the same his reflection will be purer, more apparent and more perfect in a mirror or a sheet of stagnant water. This fact does not detract from the universality of his illuminating power but shows only the difference in the capacities of the objects that reflect him. Similarly some forms are more competent than others to reflect the nature of Īśwara and are therefore prescribed by the Śāstras for contemplation. As a person who is seeing the sun reflected in a mirror forgets easily the reflecting mirror in his concentration on the reflected sun, so will the devotee forget the Divine Form before him in his concentration of the Īśwaric Force reflected therein. As with the analyser of the electric bulb, he will, on withdrawing his gaze from that Form, recognise It in other forms as well.



By strengthening and developing this power of recognising Īśwara in forms other than the particular one in which he first found Him, he will attain finally to a state of perception when all forms in the universe reflect only Īśwara. The forms will have in themselves no significance for him but will be all sacred as the vehicles of expression for Īśwara. The forms will not cease to be but will shine thenceforth as the glory of Īśwara Himself. Each form will seem to be Īśwara. It may be asked whether to him who has attained such a state of perception there will not seem to be as many Īśwaras as there are forms in the universe. An answer to this question can be given only in the form of another question. To one who is able to recognise electricity in all bulbs, does it seem that there are as many electricities as there are bulbs? Once you transcend the limitation of form, you transcend the limitation of variedness as well, for without forms there can be no variety. Īśwara therefore is only a single homogeneous entire entity pervading the universe.

Another similar question is, if Īśwara pervades the entire universe, only a fraction of Him can be present in a fraction of the universe. If a yard of twine twisted with red and white thread is cut into four, the fourth part will consist of only a fourth of the length of the red thread or of the white thread. It must be the same with the inherent Īśwara. This is the reasoning of our enquirer. But this ignores the primary fact that only formful things can be divided and that the

formless can never be. You may cut a cake into two; but the sweetness in either of the halves will remain the same and can *not* be cut into two, for unlike the cake its sweetness has no form. The tiniest spark of fire is nevertheless fire for the tininess does not appertain to the fire but to the grass wherein it finds expression. Similarly Īśwara is not fractionally present in any part of the universe but is entirely present in every particle of it, the partship and the particleship appertaining only to the form and never to Īśwara.

## 2. *His Presence*

If then Īśwara is entirely present in every part of the universe, how is it that we do not feel His presence ? This question thus again confronts us but our answer now will be a different one from what we gave before. We then attributed our non-perception of Īśwara to our being engrossed in other things and to the essential imperceptible nature of Īśwara Himself; that is, our senses of perception are either engaged elsewhere or are incompetent to perceive Him. Now we shall not throw the blame on the senses by attributing inattention or incompetency to them, but by blaming ourselves for not developing the higher sense by which we can sense the ever-present Īśwara. It is the development of that sense that is the prime object of the path of Bhakti. Health is a phenomenon which pervades our entire body. But it can be gauged by the pulse near the wrist.



To a doctor who knows more about pulsation than the ordinary man, the pulse may be felt and gauged at other points in the body. If he is extra-sensitive he will feel and recognise it at every point of the body. If similarly we attain to high sensitiveness, we can feel and recognise the Īśvaric presence in every part of the universe. "He who sees Me in all things and sees all things in Me, to him I am never absent nor he to Me" (VI, 30). "That yogin who firm in oneness devotes himself to Me, the Dweller in all beings, dwells in Me however he may seem to be" (VI, 31). "The Supreme Person within whom all beings are and by whom is all this pervaded is attainable only by single-minded Bhakti" (VIII, 22). "He alone is a seer who sees the supreme Lord residing equally in all beings, the Imperishable in the perishables" (XIII, 27).

Thanks to the divine sight which Śrī Krishna lent to Arjuna for the moment to enable him to perceive the universe-form, he attained this supreme sensitiveness and exclaimed "Thou art the first among the Gods, the ancient Person. Thou art the supreme Basis of the universe. Thou art the Knower and the Known. Thou art the highest Abode. O Thou of unlimited forms, by Thee is the universe pervaded. Thou art Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, and Chandra; Thou art Brahmā; Thou art Vishnu. Prostrations to Thee ! Prostrations to Thee a thousand-fold ! Again and again and repeatedly prostrations and prostrations to Thee ! Prostrations to thee in front and behind !

Prostrations to Thee from all directions ! O All ! O Thou of unlimited power, Thy prowess is immeasurable. Thou pervadest the All and therefore art the All" (XI, 38-40).

Arjuna was visualising the phenomenon of Īśwara pervading the all; he took that therefore as the basic fact and *deduced* therefrom the truth that He must be the All. His perception thus of the Allness of Īśwara was but a temporary one and even while it lasted it was more an inferential conclusion than a direct perception as a matter of fact. This was so, because Arjuna terrified as he was at the wonderful scenes shown to him could not forget the forms that passed before him in rapid panoramic succession and therefore his perception of Īśwara was not perfect but only as the All-form. The forms shown him were so terribly real that ordinarily he would have been overpowered by seeing them and would have no thought left for the Lord who took on such forms. But the gift of divine sight prevented him from being so completely overpowered and he was able to recognise that it was the Lord that was giving life to those forms by pervading them. Even then he did not attain to the higher truth that all the forms were but *He* and not merely *His*.

### 3. *Truer Perception*

Such a perception is not easily got; it requires considerable training and may take many births of ours



even if we devote every one of those births to the earnest quest after such knowledge. He is truly great who attains that perception. As the Lord says, "After innumerable births, *he* reaches Me who obtains the knowledge that Vāsudeva is the All. He is a great Soul and a very rare one" (VII, 19). In the case of such great souls, as the universe is brimful of Īśwara alone, all their thoughts will be centred only on Him, all their lives dedicated to Him and all their talks only about Him. They will be ever contented and happy (X, 9). As this is the ideal that we are after, the Lord asks us to have our minds concentrated on Him, our devotion centred round Him, our sacrificial rites aimed at Him, our prostrations directed to Him, in short, to have Him as our one and only Goal in life and assures us that, if we but carry out in practice this advice of His, we will be surely reaching Him (IX, 34). "He who acts only for My sake, whose highest ambition is Myself, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment or hate in all beings, certainly attains Me" (XI, 55). In this sentence the prime thing ordained is devotion; the other activities and mental states mentioned are only explanatory of the significance of devotion. If we have devotion in its true sense, the other things will follow as a matter of course, for our activities cannot have any other objective nor our minds any other attraction afterwards. A young man misled by mere outward forms may have fallen in evil ways; but, it is of daily occurrence, if he happens to deeply love his

newly-wedded wife he will soon reform himself. That is the best test of true love or devotion. Śrī Kṛishna realising it says "Even he who is highly steeped in evil must be considered a good man if he attaches himself to Me single-mindedly for he has entered the right path. He will soon become a righteous soul and reach the eternal Peace, for know for certain that no devotee of Mine ever goes down" (IX, 30-31). It is needless to say that a true devotee of Īśwara cannot possibly sin *after* he becomes a devotee, for in the sphere of action the commands of his beloved Īśwara will be his sole guide and in the sphere of thought there will be no room for hate for even the things which are hateful to others are only loveable to him as *they* are also the vehicle of Īśwara. He will be strangely contented; he will be strangely happy. He will be free from all desires. He will not act, for there is no motive impelling him to act. He will not cease to act, for there also is no motive impelling him to cease to act. His life will be a riddle to all others. He alone will have solved it. The solution will be such that he cannot communicate it to others nor can the others understand it till they themselves solve it for themselves. Even one who has tasted sugar cannot convey, to another who has not tasted it, any idea of sweetness, whatever may be his capacity for describing things in words or of the other to understand them. While so, how can we expect to be depicted in words the supreme bliss of the devotee who has realised in direct experience



the immanence of Īśwara in the universe around him ?

#### 4. *Need for Further Enquiry*

It is not our object in these pages to give any detailed account of the provisions of the Śāstras which aim at securing us such bliss but only to enunciate and elucidate some of the principles that underlie them and are referred to in or suggested by the Gītā. We have thus far tried to understand the nature of the All-pervasive Universal Objective Principle called Īśwara. At the end of the course we will have realised His immensity. But all the same He remains only as an Objective Principle. The ability to cognise Him is my own. If I decline to do so, what does it matter to me if He exists or not ? I may be a speck on the ocean of Īśwara. What does its depth or immensity matter to me as long as I am able to float on it ? The ocean may be as large as it likes but its largeness cannot take away from the speck its distinct and insistent individuality. A neighbour may be as rich as he likes; but what does it matter to me if I am able to lead an independent life of mine and if I do not covet his riches ? Similarly if Īśwara is a mere Objective Principle and therefore outside us, it does not in the least matter to us whether He exists or not, if we can lead our lives independently of Him and if we do not covet His special characteristics. Nor can He be a truly Universal Principle, if the

universe has room for us also to exist independently of Him. To demonstrate therefore the absolute universality of Īśwara, it is necessary to postulate of Him that He pervades the subjective element also in the universe. Till the realisation of this pervasion also is obtained, the conception of Īśwara as the *all*-pervading must necessarily remain imperfect. We will now therefore proceed to consider this aspect of Īśwara.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SUBJECT

#### 1. *The I in Us*

THE subjective element in the universe goes by the name of "I". It may be that, in the ordinary sense of the word "You", you are as conscious as I am; but I know nothing about you except what can react on my senses of perception; that is, so far as *I* am concerned, only the objective elements in you exist. So that, viewing the universe from my individual standpoint, the entire universe excluding myself is purely objective. To me, therefore, the word "You" has only an objective significance. Similarly the rest of the universe which can be pointed out by the pronouns this, that, he, she or it, denote only the objects of my perception. It is only *I* that is the subject. It will be the same with you and all others who are capable of perceiving. In the case of all, it is the *I* that perceives. We need not stop now to enquire if there are as many *I*'s as there are perceiving entities or if the *I* is the same in all. It will be sufficient if we realise that, so far as each one of us is concerned, the universe consists of only two entities, the Subject which is the *I* in us and the Object which is the entire universe excluding the *I* and which may therefore be called compendiously the non-*I*.

To comprehend the exact nature of the permeation

by Īśwara of the *I* in me, it is necessary at the outset to know what is this *I*. We ordinarily say, *I* go, *I* see, *I* live, *I* think, *I* decide, *I* am awake, *I* dreamt, *I* slept, and so on. It would seem therefore that the *I* is an entity capable of being active in ever so many ways. But we see as a matter of fact that the phenomenon of going is in the physical body, that of seeing is in the eye, that of living is in respiration, that of thinking is in the mind, that of deciding is in the intellect, and so on. My body goes, my eye sees, my life lives, my mind thinks, my intellect decides, and so on, will therefore be the more accurate statements. We know that when the soldiers win a battle the king says "*I* win"; when the servants lay out a garden, the owner says "*I* lay out this garden"; and so on. In all these cases the word *I* is unconsciously used as synonymous with "my soldiers", "my servants", etc. It is not due to any ignorance of the distinction between the *I* and the soldiers, etc., but to the feeling of intimate relationship bordering on identification between the two. While the word *I* is thus used even when the distinction between the non-active *I* and the really active agents is quite patent, it is no matter for surprise at all that it is used to denote the body, etc., the distinction between which and the *I* is not so patent. The activities are actually perceived in the agents, the body, the senses, etc., which are among themselves quite distinct from one another. But the *I* being in intimate relationship with each one of them at the time of the particular activities



arrogates to itself the actorship which does not really appertain to it. We ordinarily therefore include those agents also in the *I* when we say *I* act.

## 2. *The "I" Analysed*

Such agents which we ordinarily include in the conception of the *I* are

(1) the physical body which is really only the *habitation* for the *I*,

(2) the mind and the senses which are really the *instruments*, internal and external respectively, of action and of perception for the *I*,

(3) and the *individualistic principle* in us which is the prime cause of all activities.

We include all these in the ordinary conception of the Subjective Self. But is this inclusion justifiable? The Subject is a conception which is quite the opposite of the Object. The seer is the subject, the seen is the object. The hearer is the subject, the heard is the object. The experiencer is the subject, the experienced is the object. A subject can be a subject only if it is free from the characteristics which attend objectivity. Similarly an object must be free from every characteristic which attends subjectivity. We know that the characteristic of a Subject is to know, to perceive, to experience and that the characteristic of an object is to *be* known, to *be* perceived, to *be* experienced.

It is the physical body that actually comes into

contact with things of the world and but for it we can have no experience of the world around us. It is that body therefore that perceives the outside world. It is therefore a perceiver, a subject. As the outside world is ever only an object of perception, no doubt can possibly arise whether it is a subject or an object. It is always an object. Our body is the subject which perceives it. But we know that if we withdraw our eyes from the outside world and turn them towards our own body, the body becomes as perceptible as the other things in the world. We know also that the material composition of our body is not much different from that of the other things in the world and that in fact it is sustained and nourished by the latter. We must admit therefore that our body, inasmuch as it is perceivable by our own senses, is really an object in relation to them though it may seem to be a subject in relation to the outside world. Similarly the senses are subjects in relation to the physical body and other things which are perceived by them but they are in their turn perceived by the mind for we say "my eye is not now seeing well." We could not possibly say so unless the mind was witnessing the activities, past and present, of the senses. The senses are therefore objects in relation to the mind which perceives them. The mind is the subject viewed from the standpoint of the senses. The mind again, though it may perceive the senses, is itself an object in relation to the intellect in us for when the mind is wavering we are able to steady it and when



the mind is specially lazy or active we see that it is so. The intellect also is sometimes present and sometimes not present as an active agent. *I* note its presence in the waking state and its absence in the dreamless sleep. The intellect is also therefore a subject in relation to the mind but only an object in relation to the *I*. This *I* which perceives even the intellect is not perceived by anything else. It is therefore never an object. It is always a subject. It is this *I* principle in us that really gives us our perceivership. It is this *I* principle again that is responsible for the perceivership apparent in the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect.

### 3. *The Universe Analysed*

The King is the highest officer in a State. He is always a superior and is never subordinate to any other person. The lowest official is always a subordinate as there is no one lower in grade than himself; he is never a superior as all others are superior to him. But between these two extremes there are several grades of officers. Each one of them is the superior of all others who are below him and is at the same time the subordinate of all others who are above him; he is thus both a superior and a subordinate if viewed from different standpoints. But it may be noted that his superiority is because of his being vested with a few of the powers of his superiors and that his relative superiority increases as he approximates to the King. Similarly his inferiority

is because of his being divested of some of the powers of his superiors and that his relative inferiority increases as he approximates to the lowest official and is therefore farther off from the King. Further, his superiority is only a borrowed one derived from his immediate superiors and ultimately traceable to the King himself, the fountain-head of all power. The officialdom therefore resolves itself into three categories consisting of

(1) the King who is always a superior and never a subordinate,

(2) the intermediate officers who are the superiors of those below them and are at the same time the subordinates of those above them,

(3) and the lowest officer who is always a subordinate and never a superior.

Similarly the universe may be conceived of as consisting of three categories,

(1) the *I* principle or the Self in us which is always a perceiver and is never perceived,

(2) the intellect, the mind, the senses and the body which are perceivers in relation to those perceived by them but are at the same time perceived by others subtler than themselves, and

(3) the outside world which is always perceived and is never a perceiver.

Ordinarily in our conception of the objective universe we include only the third category above mentioned. It is on that basis only that we considered in the previous pages the pervasion by *Iśvara* of the objective



universe. It will now however be apparent that, inas-much as the intellect, the mind, the senses and the body are also objective, Īśwara conceived of as the pervader of the objective universe must pervade even our intellects, our minds, our senses and our bodies.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FIVE SHEATHS

#### 1. *The Gross Encasement*

OUR physical body is in no way different from the other gross material things of the world and is made of the very same five elements. Īśwara therefore pervades it in the very same way as He does the other things in the outside universe by being its causal "substance". Inasmuch as Īśwara pervades all our bodies by being their substance, all our bodies including the several limbs are but *His* forms. He is therefore conceived of as "with hands and feet on all sides, with eyes, heads and mouths on all sides, and with ears on all sides" (XIII, 13). When the Lord discloses His physical form to the astonished Arjuna, the latter sees it endowed "with countless mouths and eyes, countless shining ornaments, countless wonderful weapons (XI, 10)... with countless hands, stomachs, mouths and eyes" (XI, 16) and so on. We must remember at the same time that these are but His *forms*. A chain, a necklace and a bracelet are but forms of gold; the gold pervades them as their substance without undergoing in any the slightest degree any change in the matter of its goldness. The length, the breadth, the thickness, the shape, etc. of the chain do not in the least take away from or add to the gold anything. The gold is untouched by any



characteristic of the chain. Similarly if the chain is broken or dirtied, the gold in it can never be broken or dirtied. It ever remains entire and pure, as its essential nature is gold unrelated to any particular form or name as a chain etc. If a chain is heated or melted, the chain alone will be affected and not the gold in it, for the gold, however much it may seem to be heated or melted, remains gold as ever before. similarly we may conceive of Īśvara as the "substance" of our physical bodies. Even in this gross conception of Him, we will note that, occupying as He does the place of gold in the chain, He stands ever pure and unaffected by any characteristics or defects of our bodies. The chain-ness has a beginning; gold has none. The chain-ness is an attribute; gold is the substance. That which has a beginning may have an end. That which is an attribute may disappear. That however which is beginningless and is the substance can never be destroyed or made to change. Our bodies therefore may change, decay or die. The Īśwaric substance that pervades them can never change, decay or die. As the Lord proclaims, "Know for indestructible That by which all this is pervaded. It is impossible for any one to bring about the destruction of this Imperishable" (II, 17). "Being without beginning and without attributes, This Highest Self never decays; though He is in the body, He neither does anything nor is He affected by it" (XIII, 31). "As the *Ākāśa* permeating every thing remains unstained because of its

fineness, so does the *Ātmā* remain unstained though residing everywhere in the body" (XIII, 32). [These quotations referring to the *Ātmā* are *not* inappropriate in the present context as we shall see later on that the *Ātmā* is not different from Īśwara]. For the same reasons, "the weapons cannot cut Him, fire cannot burn Him, water cannot wet Him, air cannot dry Him" (II, 23). Conceived of as the substance of even our gross physical bodies, He is above being affected by anything being done to them. It needs no emphasising the fact that, finer and finer as our conception of Him becomes, the more and more will He be seen to be free from the limitations of the enveloping universe.

## | 2. *The Subtle Encasement*

Apart from the characteristic reactions of the five elements which compose our body, the body has an individuality of its own in the aggregate and has got a common purpose to serve. The elements are not jumbled up in the body haphazard but are arranged in a definite formation giving rise to a distinct and different reaction unknown to the elements. This distinctive feature inheres in the body as *Prāṇa* or the Life-Principle and impresses itself on the outside world as and through *Karmendriyas* or the Senses of Action. These two together, the *Prāṇa* and the *Karmendriyas*, constitute what is called *Prāṇamayakośa* as distinguished from the inert (*Tāmasik*) mass of the body which is



called *Annamayakośa*. As this is of a finer stuff than the physical body, it is said to have for its composition the *Rājasik* aspects of the five elements in their subtle state. Īśwara is even this Life. "I am the Life in all beings" (VII, 9). "I inhere in the bodies of living beings as Vaiśwānara ('Gastric Fire') and aided by *Prāṇa* and *Apāna* cook the four kinds of food" (XV, 14).

The senses of perception called the *Jñānendriyas* are made of equally fine stuff but are dissimilar to the senses of action in that the latter have to move from their places and function in space so as to establish a relationship with the external world while the senses of perception remain where they are but are still able to achieve such a relationship. That is, unlike the senses of action they do not impress themselves upon the external world but receive impressions from it. They are therefore not *active* in the sense that the senses of action are. They are therefore said to be composed of the same fine elements but in their *Sāttvik* state. When I see a tree a few yards in front of me, the sense of sight in me does not move towards the tree nor does the tree move towards me. Yet there is a contact established between my sense of sight and the tree. There must therefore be a connecting link between the two. When we are walking along a road on a dark night, we do not see the things ahead of us. Suppose we are suddenly enabled to see them by their being lighted up. We at once turn round and may see a motor car rushing up in our rear. We see its flash-lights radiating light.

But for this radiation which connects the dark things before us with the shining flash-lights behind us we will not be able to see those things, though there is nothing wrong in our power of sight. Similarly in all cases of sense-perception, a connecting radiation is required between the sense of perception and the object perceived. Such a radiation is supplied by the mind. If the mind is absent elsewhere, the senses however powerful cannot perceive anything. The senses therefore considered in their power-aspect are useless unless they are backed up by the mind. The mind flows out, as it were, through the inert senses and envelops the object perceived; at once the senses seem to perceive it. The senses have distinct characteristics of their own while the mind which sometimes flows out through the eye, sometimes through the ear and so on has to be common to them all. While therefore each of the senses is said to have for its composition only one of the five elements in their finest *sāttvik* state, the mind is said to be made of all of them put together so that it may be relatable to any of the senses as occasion may require.

Anybody accustomed to some introspection will know that in the mind there are two strata : in the lower, cogitation, doubt and wavering reign; in the higher, determination rules. The latter ever keeps a check on the vagaries of the former. If while reading a book my mind wanders to other thoughts, there is a higher power in my mind itself which is able to



withdraw the wandering mind from those distracting thoughts and direct it again towards the book before me. The mind is therefore conceived of as two-fold :—

(1) Manas, the thinking faculty or mind proper,

(2) Buddhi, the determining faculty or intellect. This distinction is most often kept up, but in some places the words Manas and Buddhi may be indiscriminately used to denote either of them or both of them put together. Giving importance to this distinction, we may say that the senses of perception may sometimes be backed up by Manas, the thinking faculty, and sometimes by Buddhi, the determining faculty. Manas in conjunction with the senses of perception is called *manomayakośa*; Buddhi in conjunction with the senses of perception is called *vijñānamayakośa*. As the intellect is able to regulate and control the activities of the lower thinking mind, the *manomayakośa* is considered as subordinate and inferior to the *vijñānamayakośa*. The difference is not due to any difference in their composition but only to the difference in their respective functioning.

### 3. *The Causal Encasement*

When the mind, both the lower and the higher aspects included, is inactive as in sound sleep, only the *I* the individualistic principle in us is awake and even his being awake then has in effect to be inferred

from our recollection that *we* slept. As there can be no recollection of an unexperienced fact, we must grant that even during sleep *we* were really experiencing. As the senses and the mind are all inactive then, the *object* experienced must transcend the senses and the mind and be capable of being experienced without their help. We have said above that in ordinary experience the mind illuminates the object perceived; as this illumination is absent in deep sleep, the experience is necessarily of a different kind altogether, namely, of darkness. The *I* is present but there is nothing there to experience but darkness. That is why we say "I slept soundly. I knew nothing". All the same it cannot be denied that in experiencing this darkness or ignorance we found peace and happiness also, for we ourselves say "I had a *pleasant* sleep." We cannot possibly say so if we did not experience the pleasantness at the time of sleeping. It may be seen therefore that when the mind and the senses are quite inactive the *I* principle is quite awake but not quite alone for there is a "pleasant darkness" to keep it company. But for its presence the experience of sleep will be impossible and for want of an object of experience the experiencer, the individualistic *I*, will completely disappear. This "pleasant darkness" is called *ānanda-mayakośa*, the "darkness" or *avidyā* which is finer than the fine elements being its material aspect and the "pleasantness" or *ānanda* being its force aspect.

We have thus arrived at an enumeration of the



five *kośas* or sheaths which envelop the inmost *I* in us. They are, in order,

1. The *annamayakośa*, which consists of the physical body, has the five gross elements in their *tāmasik* aspect for its material and has no activity of its own accord,

2. the *prāṇamayakośa*, which consists of the *prāṇa* or Life-Principle (with its five sub-divisions) and the five *karmendriyas* or Faculties of Action, has for its material the five subtle elements in their *rājasik* aspect and has Life and Action as its functions.

3. the *manomayakośa*, which consists of Manas, the lower mind, and the five *jñānendriyas* or Faculties of Perception, has for its material the five subtle elements in their *sāttwik* aspect and has Thought and Perception as its functions,

4. the *vijñānamayakośa*, which consists of Buddhi, the higher mind, and the five *jñānendriyas* or Faculties of Perception, has for its material the same five subtle elements in their *sāttwik* aspect and has Intellection and Will as its functions and

5. the *ānandamayakośa*, which consists of *avidyā*, has *avidyā* alone for its material and has *ānanda* as its function.

In view of the nature of the materials composing them, the second, the third and the fourth *kośas* composed as they are of the same subtle elements are usually clubbed together and are included in what is called the *sūkṣma śarīra* or Subtle Body. The *annamaya-*

*kośa* goes then by the name of *sthūla śarīra* or Gross Body; and the *ānandamayakośa* gets the name of *kāraṇa śarīra* or Causal Body. Thus the five *kośas* together correspond to the three Bodies.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE GOAL OF BHAKTI

#### 1. *The Nature of God*

ĪSWARA conceived of as the pervader of our personalities which ordinarily include the three Bodies mentioned in the last chapter has to be considered in three corresponding aspects *viz.*, (1) as the pervader of our *sthūla śarīras*, (2) as the pervader of our *sūkṣma śarīras* and (3) as the pervader of our *kāraṇa śarīras*. In the Vedānta three distinct names are given to these three aspects. As the pervader of our *sthūla śarīras*, He is called *Virāt* or *Vaiśvānara*. As the pervader of our *sūkṣma śarīras*, He is called *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Sūtrātmā*. As the pervader of our *kāraṇa śarīras*, He is called merely *Iśvara* or *Antaryāmī*. It was an exhibition of the *Virāt* aspect that the Lord vouchsafed to Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. In fact, that is the only aspect which can be visualised by anybody even though gifted with the power of divine vision. The *sūkṣma* body *including* as it does the instruments of perception cannot be the *object* of perception; the *kāraṇa* body *transcending* as it does the instruments of perception cannot equally be the *object* of perception. In fact, we cannot conceive of the *sūkṣma* or the *kāraṇa śarīra* independent of the *sthūla śarīra* where they function. The mind and the senses do not and

cannot exist unrelated to the body wherein they function; nor can the individualistic principle as such without an embodiment wherein it can exert or assert itself. In deep sleep or in the dream state, they may seem to be absent, but they have only retired as it were into the private chambers of the body to take rest or to experience certain pleasures or pains not obtainable in the external world. They inhere in and continue in the body. If they did not, the body would cease to live and become mere "dead" matter. The three aspects are therefore so inter-related and inter-dependent that they cannot be separated except in theory to enable us to understand the nature of our Self in relation to our bodies and the nature of Īśwara in relation to the universe. In the Gītā therefore the entire objective world including these three bodies, individualistic and cosmic, is conceived of as a single category; the Real Subject who is the Witness of all objective phenomena forms the other category. Both together make up and exhaust the entirety of Īśwara. The former is His "lower Nature" and is called the *kṣetra*, the Field of Objectivity; the latter is His "higher Nature" and is called the *kṣetrajña*, the Knower of the Field. The Lord says "My Nature is eight-fold *viz.*, (1) the Earth (2) the Waters (3) the Fire (4) the Air (5) the Space (6) the Manas (7) the Buddhi and (8) the *I*. This is the lower. Know that the other, the higher Nature, is the Soul by which this world is sustained" (VII, 5). It will be seen that the first five



being the elemental substances comprise the entire physical creation including therein our *sthūla śarīras*. The sixth and the seventh denote the *sūkṣma* creation including our *sūkṣma śarīras*. The eighth is the causal factor and includes our *kāraṇa śarīras*. All together exhaust the entire creation, the eighth being the cause and the others effects. As the cause is ever inherent in the effects, it never dies or changes. The cause is therefore sometimes called *akṣara* the Indestructible, in contrast with the effects, which are called *kṣara* the Destructible. "All that is born is *kṣara*. The unchanging is *akṣara*. The Person who is different from and is higher than these two is known as the Highest Self, the Imperishable, the Lord, who pervades the three worlds and sustains them. I transcend the *kṣara*. I transcend even the *akṣara*. Hence am I known in the Vedas and in the world as *Puruṣottama*, the Highest Person" (XV, 16-18).

## 2. His Causal Nature

As I mentioned before, the *kṣara* the effect and the *akṣara* the cause together make up the lower Nature of *Īśwara*. The transcending entity which is therefore neither a cause nor an effect is His higher Nature. The lower or the *kṣetra* aspect of *Īśwara* is responsible for "the five great elements, the *ahamkāra*, the *Buddhi*, the unmanifest, the eleven *Indriyas*, the five objects of the *Indriyas*, desire, hate, pleasure, pain, the body,

the consciousness, the sustaining life" (XIII, 5-6) and in short for everything objective and is sometimes merely called Prakṛti the Supreme Cause and is conceived of as inseparable from the Puruṣa the Supreme Person, the higher or the *kṣetrajña* aspect of the Lord. As an attribute of the Lord and in fact as an essential though the lower part of his Nature, Prakṛti cannot but be as eternal as Puruṣa the higher aspect of Īśwara. Both of them therefore are conceived of as equally eternal (XIII, 19) in spite of the vast difference between them. In fact, as more than once observed before, the perceiver cannot be a perceiver unless there is something to be perceived; nor can the perceived be called a perceived unless there is somebody to perceive it. The two conceptions are so inter-dependent that they cannot but be co-eval. We cannot have any conception of the one without a conception of the other at the same time. The object universe therefore exists only because of the subject who is witnessing it. If these two were entirely unrelated to each other, there can be no perception at all. All experience therefore is the result of the contact between the objective *kṣetra* and the subject *kṣetrajña*. Nothing movable or immovable can possibly exist unless there is this antecedent contact (XIII, 26). What the exact nature of this contact is will be explained later on. It is sufficient for our present purpose to realise that the entire objective world is pervaded by, and in fact forms the lower Nature of, Īśwara and therefore



indistinguishable from Him. As all our bodies, senses, minds and intellects are but part of the objective universe, they are also necessarily pervaded by Īśwara. The Lord's words that "Īśwara resides in the heart of all beings and by His Māyā whirls round all beings as if mounted on mills" (XVIII, 61) and that "from Me arise memory, knowledge and forgetfulness" (XV, 15) are no idle boast. He has "hands and feet on all sides, eyes, heads and mouths on all sides, ears on all sides" (XIII, 14) as the hands, feet etc. which we consider to be ours are really His and form part of His cosmic body.

### 3. *The True Devotee*

Once this supreme truth that all that we have been accustomed hitherto to call our own, from our external possessions to the inmost power of consciousness in us, are really part of and belong to Īśwara is brought home to us and is ever kept in mind by us, we cannot possibly err for we will know that we are really inactive and that what is active is only the Prakṛti or the lower aspect of Īśwara. "He who knows thus the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti with its qualities is not born again however he may be (XIII, 23).... He is a Seer who sees all activities of every sort as done by Prakṛti and sees himself as non-active" (XIII, 29). As he knows that there is really nothing in this vast universe which he can with any claim to truth call his, much less make

his, all motive for selfish action is taken away from him. If he is seen by others as acting, that is only because of Īśwara's Prakṛti carrying out its own purposes and not because of any conscious act on the part of the Seer born of the sense of doership. The world contains for him nothing but Īśwara. All the elements which made him think that he was an independent individual with an insistent personality have all now turned out to be one with Īśwara and he cannot with any justice retain any characteristic which clothed him with individuality till now. All is Vāsudeva and in the All he finds his own individuality included. The sense of doership once eliminated, pain and pleasure have ceased for him for ever. He lives in the Lord for ever more.

Such is the glory promised to the one who with firm and unbounded faith in an All-pervading Īśwara treads steadfastly the path of Bhakti. In the foregoing pages we have confined ourselves to a consideration of the All-pervasive nature alone of the Lord. To the attentive reader who has closely followed the method of treatment adopted above, it will be apparent that, if we follow up the other accepted attributes of the Lord like the All-knowing, the All-powerful, the All-merciful and so on, even then the result will be the same. The All-pervasive cannot but have the other attributes as well and *vice versa*. It is, therefore, unnecessary for us to analyse or point out the significance of the other epithets. It is sufficient to mention that each one of these epithets is competent in itself to convey to us



an idea of Īśwara and necessarily includes the significance of the other epithets also. Such an All-comprehensive Being, if firmly believed in, cannot but attract our wayward minds and steady them in the contemplation of Itself. The mind, weaned as it has been from all worldly desires by steady practice in the field of desireless activities and then by the lesson of Vairāgya, now becomes completely pure and steady by the contemplation of the everpure Īśwara. A muddy pool cannot reflect the sun ever so bright it may be. Nor can a running stream so reflect ever so pure its waters may be. The ability to reflect therefore does not depend at all on the brightness of the object reflected but on the purity and the steadiness of the reflecting substance. Īśwara the ever pure and ever bright is ever and everywhere present but cannot be properly reflected in our minds if they are impure or unsteady. If these two defects, impurity and unsteadiness, are removed by the courses of training referred to above, viz., Self-less Action and Concentrated Devotion respectively, there is no further impediment in the way of Īśwara reflecting Himself in all His splendour in the heart of the aspirant. The devout Bhakta resides in the Lord and the Lord resides in him (IX, 29). "Those who resign all their activities in Me and with Me as their Goal and concentrate upon and worship Me with single-pointed attention and whose minds are centred in Myself—I lift them up from the ocean of mortal life before long" (XII, 7). The process of lifting up is explained by the

Lord Himself elsewhere thus : "To those who with love ever dwell on Me, I bestow that knowledge with the help of which they attain Me. Taking compassion on them, I residing in their hearts dispel by the brilliant light of Jñāna the darkness born of ignorance" (X, 10-11). It would seem, therefore, from the Divine Teacher's words that there is a step, still higher, to ascend even after perfection in Bhakti. What is then this "darkness born of ignorance" which still persists and requires to be eradicated by the dawn of knowledge ? And what is that knowledge and how is it different from or higher than the one which gives us a realisation of the immanence of Íśwara in every particle of the universe including our own encasements ? Freedom is promised to the Bhakta "before long" but to the Jñānī it is the immediate result (IV, 39). Why is it so ? These are questions which deserve separate treatment.



## CHAPTER XVI

### WHAT IS MĀYĀ ?

#### I. Causal Nature

IN the earlier chapters we dwelt on the fact that the *I* in us which is essentially non-active arrogates to itself the function or characteristic of "doership" which really appertains to the nature or *swabhāva* and that the ascent in the path of spiritual progress was in proportion to the freedom from this mistaken impression. We also found in the later chapters that activity was really the characteristic of the encasements of the Self and that these encasements formed but a part of the lower nature of Īśwara. If therefore no action is possible in the universe but for the lower Nature of Īśwara and if it is true that our *swabhāva* alone is responsible for the activities perceived in us, it necessarily follows that our *swabhāva* cannot but be a part of or an aspect of that lower Nature of Īśwara. The *śāstras* tell us that every particle of our bodies has impressed upon it the seal of our *swabhāva* or Collective Impulse gathered by us in all our lives hitherto; every breath and every thought of ours is equally so impressed. The modern scientists who have taken the trouble of looking into this matter bear out also this truth that our "individuality" impresses itself on and finds expression in every atom of our body, in every action of ours, physical or mental.

Our thinkers go further and say that it is not merely true that our "nature" reacts on our bodies, actions and thoughts but they themselves are only the concrete expressions of the nature within. According to them, there is no need for any embodiment at all, much less for any action or thought, unless there is the urge of a nature behind seeking to find expression. The *sthūla śarīra*, the physical body, is the gross expression of that nature and the *sūkṣma śarīra*, the subtle body, is a finer expression of that same nature. The *kāraṇa śarīra*, the causal body is the same nature in its potential state and is the seed of future experiences. As all these are objective in the sense that we experience them and as we have seen that everything objective is but an aspect of Īśwara, we have to conclude that the corresponding "gross" (*sthūla*) "fine" (*sūkṣma*) and "causal" (*kāraṇa*) aspects of Īśwara are really the objects of our experience, though we may not realise these aspects as such at the time of experiencing them. We have referred to the gross and fine aspects of Īśwara in some detail before and it is unnecessary to cover the same ground over again. We shall now therefore confine ourselves to a consideration of the "causal" aspect of Īśwara.

## 2. *Māyā Analysed*

At the outset it may be necessary to remind the reader that though there seems to be only blankness



during deep sleep there is a positive background of happiness which enables us to say that we had a *pleasant* sleep. Further, when you say "I knew nothing during deep sleep", you will have to answer the question "How do you know that you knew nothing during deep sleep ?" One cannot assert as a fact even his own ignorance unless he experienced even that ignorance as an object of his knowledge. If I say that I see nothing in a lighted room, that only means that I *do* see but that the things that I ordinarily expect to or am accustomed to see there are not there. Similarly, if I look into a dark room and say that I see nothing, it does not mean any denial of my seeing or of my seeing the darkness. In fact, I cannot possibly say that I see nothing unless my faculty of seeing did actually function but failed to come into contact with any known object. That is why we mentioned in a previous context that the objective phenomenon experienced in deep sleep was a "pleasant darkness". This "pleasant darkness", this "causal state", this "seed of all experiences", this positive "ignorance," goes by the name of *avidyā*. The corresponding cosmic aspect of Īśwara which pervades and comprehends the Avidyās of all individual experiencers is in its own cosmic plane a "pleasant darkness", a "causal state", a "seed of all experiences", a positive "ignorance", and goes by the name of *Māyā*. Avidyā is thus individualised *Māyā* and *Māyā* is universal Avidyā. As the number of individuals in the universe is countless, so is Avidyā varied and countless.

But Māyā the one and universal is homogeneous and without a second. We have mentioned before that the “experiencer” and the “experienced” are two mutually inter-dependent conceptions and are brought into existence simultaneously by the single act of “experience”. It follows therefore that if Māyā is the aggregate of all Avidyās the seeds of individual experienter-ships, it has necessarily to be the aggregate of all the seeds of various experienced-ships as well. The same Māyā is thus considered as the root cause of all experiences, the experiencers and the experienced included. But as there is this practical distinction between these two aspects that the one is the active element and the other is the passive element in experience, the former is relatively spoken of as the Rājasī or active aspect of Māyā and the latter as the Tāmasī or dull aspect of Māyā. The causal aspect of Māyā which develops into these two aspects is called Sāttwikī Māyā and is considered as the attribute of the causal Īśwara. All the three aspects, the Tāmasī, the Rājasī and the Sāttwikī however merge into the one undifferentiated Māyā when there is no manifestation at all. In the unmanifest state there is no need for differentiation; all the three aspects lose their individual characteristics and, as it were, cease to be. But the potentiality to emerge again as distinct aspects when the need for manifestation arises is never absent from even the undifferentiated Māyā. In relation to the universe the creature of Māyā, She is called *avyakta*, the unmanifest. But in relation to Īśwara the



Supreme Being, She is His Śakti or potentiality. Māyā is all-powerful as regards her own progeny, the individual selves and the inert world, but is subservient to Īśwara the Supreme Wielder of Power. We the individual selves, the experiencers, and the world around us, the experienced, being thus the effects of Māyā cannot possibly get out of or get rid of Māyā. A gold necklace made from gold can never, even at the hands of the most skilful workman, escape from the gold which is its material. The necklace, the effect, and the gold, the cause, are by the very reason of the relationship of cause and effect, inseparable. How can we then over-reach Māyā that has given us birth as individual selves ? Well therefore does the Lord proclaim "My Māyā is insuperable" (VII, 14).

From His stand as the Supreme Wielder of this Power, the Lord says "At the end of the Kalpa, all beings merge in My Prakṛti. At the beginning of the Kalpa, I create them again using my Prakṛti. I thus again and again create all these beings dependent on and subject as they are to Prakṛti" (IX, 7-8). The same idea is expressed elsewhere but without reference to the Īśwara who wields and owns this potentiality of infinite manifestation. "From the Unmanifest, all the manifested things arise at the dawn of the day (of Brahmā) and on the coming on of the night dissolve even in that called the Unmanifest. The same beings are born again and again. They involuntarily dissolve at the advent of the night and involuntarily come up

at the advent of the morning" (VIII, 18-19). Let however that this "Unmanifest" which is really the lower nature of Īśwara should be confused with His higher nature, the Lord hastens to add "But there is another state, the Eternal and the Unmanifest different from the Unmanifest above mentioned and *that* does not cease to exist even when all beings disappear" (VIII, 20).

### 3. *Our Problems*

So long therefore as we are unable to dissociate from us our inmost and strongest encasement known as *Avidyā*, the prime cause of all activities and experiences, it will be impossible to escape the trammels of the all powerful *Māyā*, the lower nature of Īśwara. It is impossible to have an embodiment and at the same time remain inactive (XVIII, 11). It is impossible to be the doer of an action and at the same time escape the fruits of that action. Again it is equally impossible to retain *Avidyā* and at the same time escape embodiment; or rather it is impossible to have an embodiment and yet be free from *Avidyā* the seed of all activities. Is it possible then to free ourselves from *Avidyā* and the consequent embodiment and thus make ourselves independent of the all-powerful *Māyā*? If it is not so possible and if we are by our very nature and constitution only subordinate to *Māyā* and if it is true that *Māyā* alone is the cause of all activity in the



universe, we might be excused from making any attempts at spiritual progress or from any other voluntary activity on our part, for there can be no scope for any voluntary endeavour in a universe ruled over and kept running by the omnipotent *Māyā*. His *Māyā* is indeed insuperable (VII, 14). Does the Lord then eliminate all scope for free-will on our part from the universe altogether ? Does He accept the proposition that we are so helpless in the hands of an all-powerful *Māyā* that we are deprived of all initiative ? Are we then no more than the straw that is tossed here and there at the mercy of every passing wind ? The Lord sternly and emphatically repudiates any such suggestion that we must ever bear the badge of servitude. He assures us that those who attain *Him* transcend this *Māyā* (VII, 14). But this seemingly very simple recipe for transcending *Māyā* lands us only in further difficulties, for we have to ascertain how we are to *attain* the Lord. And further how can the attaining of the Lord have any bearing on the question of transcending *Māyā* ? If *Māyā* is but the "lower nature" of *Īśwara*, do we not by attaining *Īśwara* attain *Māyā* His lower nature as well and how can we hope by this means to transcend *Māyā* ?

These questions will get themselves automatically answered if we look more deeply into the matter and learn the exact nature of this *Māyā* from whose shackles we are attempting to free ourselves. We have said above that *Māyā* is the potentiality of *Īśwara* to mani-

fest Himself as the universe and that it is, with its grosser modifications, identical with the lower nature of Īśwara. We have also said above that it is the aggregate of all the *Avidyās* of the individual selves. In fact we have defined it with reference to Īśwara, with reference to the universe and with reference to the individual self. No definition of *Māyā as it is*, without reference to anything else, has been attempted hitherto. Even the attribute of "pleasant darkness" which we ascribed to it expressed only its reaction on the experiencing Self. What is it in itself unrelated to any other entity ? This question again is capable of being answered only in one way as we shall find in the sequel.

#### 4. *A Definition*

First of all, it is necessary to bear in mind that a definition is intended to convey to us an accurate description of a thing and that a definition may therefore be of two kinds, either mentioning the essential and exclusive characteristic of that thing or mentioning its relationship (let it be similarity or dissimilitude, subordination or mastery, or any other kind of relationship) to a thing already well known to us. In the first kind of definition again, namely, mentioning the essential and exclusive characteristic of a thing, it will be seen that, as that characteristic is exclusively its and is therefore not found in any other thing, we cannot possibly have any conception of that characteristic at all unless we already know the thing itself for which we want a defi-



nition; and if we know the thing already, the mention of its characteristic to us is meaningless and unnecessary. The only practical method of teaching, therefore, is the defining of a particular thing with regard to its relationship to well-known things. There can therefore be no reasonable objection to the definition of *Māyā* that we have given above. But our problem does not stop with a mere attempt to understand the nature of *Māyā* as the prime cause of manifestation for we want to *transcend* it. How can we possibly do so unless we know its essential characteristic ? As mentioned before, this essential characteristic must be exclusively its, otherwise it will not be a distinctive attribute at all. Here again as *Māyā* is an unknown entity and its distinctive characteristic is equally unknown to us, we have first to get at that characteristic by means of its relationship, if any, to any other entity already familiar to us. If we see how that characteristic finds expression in the effects of *Māyā*, we can deduce therefrom the nature of that characteristic. The Lord tells us that the people have their "knowledge taken away by *Māyā*" (VII, 15) and that He Himself is "not patent to all as He is screened by *Māyā*" (VII, 25). *Māyā* would therefore seem to be something which takes away our knowledge from us and screens *Īśwara* from us. The Lord tells us in another context "Knowledge is shrouded by Ignorance" (V, 15). Taking these passages together we see that *Māyā* is in the nature of Ignorance; it imparts ignorance to us and screens *Īśwara* from us.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TRANSCENDENCE OF MĀYĀ

#### 1. *The Veil of Māyā*

IN a previous chapter we mentioned that a sheet of water which is both pure and stagnant will readily and perfectly reflect the bright sun above; but that can possibly be only if no cloud intervenes between the water and the sun. Similarly therefore, however pure our minds may have become by the austere practice of Desireless Action and however steady they may have become by the persistent pursuit of Bhakti, still Īśwara in His true and higher nature can never be found reflected therein if the screen of *Māyā* is intact. As the cloud intervening between the sun and the people here below darkens the people by throwing its shadow on them but does not in the least either by itself or by its shadow darken or touch the ever resplendent sun above, so does *Māyā* by its shadow called *Avidyā* darken the universe subordinate to it but does not in the least either by itself or by its modifications darken or touch the ever resplendent Īśwara who transcends it. If on a cloudy day a child wants his father to show the sun to him, he has necessarily to point out the hazy bright patch in the sky as the sun : and if it so happens that all the days are cloudy, he will never have any conception of the sun other than as a hazy



bright patch. Only if the cloud is removed or if he rises above the cloud can he have any proper conception; once he has that conception he will be ashamed to recollect that his previous conception of that brilliant orb was so imperfect and so much below the actual fact; but he will realise at the same time that that prior conception could not have been otherwise so long as the cloud intervened between himself and the sun above. Applying the same principle to the subject on hand, subject as we are to the domination of *Māyā*, we cannot, so long as we are so subject, have any perfect conception of the *Īśwara* that shines in all His unlimited glory far above the cloud of *Māyā* but our conception will be vague, hazy and imperfect as we perceive Him only through the mist or veil of *Māyā* that blocks our vision. It is this latter concept that has been in the fore-going pages called the lower nature of *Īśwara*. It cannot but be dim and imperfect; but that is the only conception we can possibly have of Him so long as we are under the cloud of *Māyā*. Even this imperfect Seer is seeing only *Īśwara*; and his knowledge is certainly a knowledge of *Īśwara*; but the *Īśwara* that he so sees does not exhaust and is not identical with the *Īśwara* known by the perfect Seer. "I stand supporting all this universe by a *part* of Myself" (X, 42), says the Lord. The "entire" *Īśwara* is unlimited and illimitable.

The Lord therefore even while saying that the knowledge of the *Kṣetra* and the knowledge of the

*Kṣetrajña* are both knowledge takes care to add "But know that the *Kṣetrajña* is Myself" (XIII, 3), indicating thereby very clearly that one who knows the *Kṣetra* does not know the perfect *Īśwara*. The further conclusion is irresistible that, though the entire *Kṣetra* (the primal *Māyā* and all its resultants) is spoken of for all practical purposes as the lower nature of *Īśwara*, it is not an essential element of His true nature, for the Lord declines to equate it with Himself. He is willing to concede great importance to a knowledge of this aspect as conducive to further steps in spiritual illumination but refuses to treat this knowledge as a knowledge of Himself. He wants us to free ourselves from the *Māyā* and, once that is done, a direct perception of the effulgent glory of *Īśwara* who shines far above it follows as a matter of course.

## 2. *The Nature of Māyā*

How is it then possible to free ourselves from this *Māyā*? If it is the root cause of all limited manifestation and if we are limited individual selves, how can it be possible for an "effect" to escape its "cause"? Can a pot ever so fine escape the mud which constitutes it? It seems to be an impossible feat. But as the Lord wants us to do it, if we want eternal peace, it must be within the range of possibility. Again, how can we remain as individual selves without embodiment and how can we remain embodied if we transcend



*Māyā*, the cause of all embodiment ? The only answer to these possible questions lies in the bold enunciation of the inevitable truth that *we* are *not* the limited individual selves at all. The Self as such knows no limitation or individuality; such characteristics belong to and stop with the encasement through which the Self seems to function; if *Māyā* is transcended, embodiment its sequel also ceases for ever. All these questions and doubts arise only because of our mistakenly identifying ourselves with these encasements of *Māyā*-manufacture. The moment we realise our true and essential nature as unlimited by any kind of encasement, they cease to limit us and we are no more in the clutches of *Māyā*. It is true that a pot cannot free itself from its causal substance, the mud. But *we* are not so made from *Māyā*. What is so made is really the *Kṣetra* aspect of the universe, namely, the means of limited perception and the objects thereof. All trouble arises because of the contact and the consequent intermingling of these two aspects the *Kṣetra* and the *Kṣetrajña* (XIII, 26). The *Kṣetrajña* in us is not a creation of the *Kṣetra* at all; He is *not* an "effect" of *Māyā*; [there is therefore no impediment in the way of His realising His independence of *Māyā*. The contact or connection between the *Kṣetrajña* (the Self) and the *Kṣetra* (*Māyā* and its manifestations) is not at all similar to the one between a pot and the mud from which it is made, that is, as effect and cause. Nor is it a case of mutual dependency, for *Māyā* cannot exist independently of the Self while

the Self can exist independently of *Māyā*. Nor is it in fact any of the kinds of relationship known to us by which one thing can be related to another. For if a relationship exists between two things, an intimate knowledge of one of those things will ordinarily give us an intimate knowledge of the other to which it is related; but we have, in the present instance and relying upon the accuracy of the Lord's teachings, to imagine a kind of relationship between the Self and *Māyā* in which if we know or realise the Self in its true nature *Māyā* will cease to be. In fact, the moment the true nature of the Self is realised, *Māyā* disappears altogether; and, as long as *Māyā* subsists, the Self does not show itself in its true glory. They do not therefore so exist simultaneously as to enable us to formulate any kind of relationship between the two. Light and darkness cannot exist simultaneously; the moment light is let into a dark room, the darkness will disappear. And yet we conceive of a relationship between light and darkness, namely, that of being the opposites of each other. Can we say of the Self and *Māyā* that they are similarly the opposites of each other, in the sense that the Self is a negation of *Māyā* and that *Māyā* is a negation of the Self. But we have seen from the very beginning that all our troubles are due to the co-existence of the Self and *Māyā* and the consequent confusion between the two. It is not therefore quite true to say that they are in the nature of opposites and cannot coexist. But in co-existing it so happens



that when we are under the influence of *Māyā* we cannot realise the Self and that when we realise the Self we cannot be under the influence of *Māyā*. That is, at one time only one of them can be felt. If our experience of *Māyā* is a right experience, then our experience of the Self cannot be a true experience; similarly if our experience of the Self is a right experience, our experience of *Māyā* cannot be a true experience. Either alone of such experiences can be a right one and the other one must necessarily be false or mistaken. In this connection we may conveniently and usefully recall the pillar-thief example that we considered in a previous context. There, so long as we see the thief, we cannot see the pillar; and when we see the pillar, the thief will no longer be found. One of them therefore must be a false seeming and the other one a true reality. The pillar is not the "opposite" of a thief, nor is the thief an "opposite" of the pillar. The perception of the pillar does not *destroy* the thief as the advent of light destroys darkness; it simply tells us that there was in fact no thief at all *even* at the time when he was actually seen. Similarly, as *Māyā* and the Self both co-exist in the universe but are incapable of being realised simultaneously, the one must be a false seeming and the other a true reality.

### 3. *The Origin of Māyā*

For the present we shall accept the Lord's assurance that *Māyā* is transcendable and that the Self is the Reality. The perception of the Self then as in the case of the pillar does not destroy *Māyā* but only tells us that there was in fact nothing like *Māyā* even at the time when it was being actually experienced. The thief in the pillar does as a matter of fact terrify the people who are under the illusion but cannot in the least touch or affect the pillar which forms the reality on which this seeming phenomenon is super-imposed. As remarked elsewhere, the mirage pool cannot wet the ground on which it is seen. *Māyā* then exists for those who are under its influence and does not exist at all for those who transcend it. In short, it is a seeming and not a Reality. The thief is not an *effect* of the pillar nor is he in any other way related to it except in the sense that the pillar is the real substratum on which the illusion of a thief appears. The appearance of the thief in the pillar is not a logical phenomenon; for if it were a logical sequence, the thief must appear wherever and whenever there is a pillar; nor can we say that all the circumstances that exist at the moment are collectively the cause for this phenomenon, for none of the circumstances disappears even when we find out the mistake; they continue to exist but the illusion is no more to be found. Further, even supposing that all these circumstances combine to create an illusion, they



cannot explain how we happen to attach a reality to it. A skilful workman may make a life-like model of a tiger and yet it is not all that are terrified by it; some are actually afraid of it mistaking it for a real tiger while others appreciate with pleasure the execution realising that the tiger is a false one. If we have our wits about us, the artist cannot *make* us mistake the model for the real thing. Or in other words the mistake is not the logical or necessary result of the workmanship; it is entirely ours. The seeming is thus never the "result" of the Reality; the Reality is never responsible for it except as being the substratum whereon the seeming may seem; it is entirely a creation of our ignorance. It cannot exist independently of the Reality and has no reality of its own; even its seeming reality is what our ignorance attributes to it and is therefore co-eval with our ignorance. Māyā then considered as the potentiality of Īśwara in being the cause of all seeming is and cannot but be co-eval with our ignorance or Avidyā. Though we stated before that Avidyā is a "part" of Māyā, the real fact is that Avidyā and Māyā are but different aspects of the same thing. In relation to us it is called Avidyā and in relation to Īśwara it is called Māyā. So long as we are subject to Avidyā, so long will Īśwara seem related to Māyā. The thief in the pillar is co-eval with our own ignorance; both take their birth together and disappears together. Similarly, when Avidyā disappears, Māyā also will disappear. A single wall built across a hall is sufficient to divide

it into two distinct halls; the dividing wall which is really one will become the *eastern* wall of one of such halls and at the same instant will be the *western* wall of the other hall. If we pull down the eastern wall of the western hall, no independent effort is necessary to pull down the western wall of the eastern hall. Both of them will disappear at the same instant for in reality they are but one. Similarly, Māyā the screen which separates Īśwara from us is but a single entity. It imparts "causality" to Īśwara and Avidyā to us. The moment Avidyā disappears, the causality of Īśwara also will disappear. If our conception of Īśwara is limited to this causality, this Īśwara so limitedly conceived has also to disappear. Many who are unable to conceive of Īśwara apart from His lower nature and free from this causality reproach the Vedāntin for formulating a step wherein the Īśwara conceived of by them has necessarily to disappear; they even go to the length of attributing "atheism" to the Vedāntin. But this is due only to their failure or incompetence to appreciate the truth that the Vedāntin by freeing Īśwara from the limiting and relative attribute of causality is really emphasising on His transcendent nature and does not in the least deny His existence. On the other hand, the non-Vedāntin by assuming that causality is an essential attribute of Īśwara denies the existence of Īśwara as transcendent thereto. He is the real "atheist". Nobody who perceives a pillar thinks of it ever afterwards as the "cause" of a thief. Being the



“cause” of, or the “substratum” for, a thief is a transient phenomenon unrelated to the essential nature of a pillar. The “causeness”, in short, is not an attribute of the pillar but only a creation of our ignorance. To say that such an attribute is an essential characteristic of the pillar is really to deny the existence of the pillar apart from its potentiality to cause the illusion of a thief.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SUPREME GOAL

#### 1. *Stages of Ignorance*

If we re-shuffle the principles we have considered in the previous chapters, we will recognise that Māyā is the root cause of three kinds of duality *viz.*,

- (1) the causal Īśwara and the resultant universe,
- (2) Īśwara the Wielder of Māyā and Jīva the Avidyā-bound, and

(3) Jeeva the perceiver and the universe the perceived. We have seen also that if the Jīva is able to get rid of his enveloping Avidyā, the relative aspect of Īśwara as the Wielder of Māyā will also disappear; the moment Īśwara the Wielder of Māyā—the causal principle—disappears, the resultant universe has necessarily also to disappear; again the moment that the universe the perceived disappears, the relative aspect of Jīva as the perceiver will also disappear. It follows therefore that the Jīva by getting rid of his Avidyā can by this single effort put an end to all these kinds of duality. Further, the Jīva the Avidyā-bound, so long as he is so, cannot put an end to Māyā which is supreme over him or to his own perceivership the effect of that Avidyā; he cannot therefore make Īśwara the Wielder of Māyā or the perceived universe disappear. The only way therefore of getting rid of these kinds



of duality is by putting an end to Avidyā itself. The elimination of Avidyā is thus the efficient means and the only means of getting rid of duality.

"How to eliminate Avidyā?" is a question similar to the question "How to eliminate ignorance?" Broadly speaking, ignorance has two stages or degrees of intensity. True knowledge is when we say "This is it." If instead we say either "This is not it" or "This is something else", we show our ignorance of that thing. But these two statements are themselves only the results of an antecedent stage of mere non-perception of that thing. It will be convenient if we take up for consideration the example of the rope-snake so familiar to the Vedāntin.

(1) The first causal stage of ignorance is when the rope is merely obscured. There is only non-perception of the rope. We perceive in that stage neither the rope nor the snake. The perception is confined to a mere undefined thing as "this."

(2) The next stage of ignorance is reached when we perceive something which is not a rope. Here the snake is no doubt not perceived; but our perception of the thing before us is, unlike the previous stage, a positive perception of a non-rope whatever it may be.

(3) The last stage is when we see a snake in that undefined non-rope something.

Our minds, accustomed as they have been to clothe everything with which they come into contact with particular names and particular forms, would not

allow the second stage above mentioned to last for more than a moment, so much so that ordinarily we are apt to forget that there is such an intermediate stage of ignorance. For practical purposes therefore, it is usual to ignore that stage and postulate only two stages of ignorance including that intermediate stage in the previous one or in the latter one as may suit the fancy or the reasoning of each individual thinker : "Knowledge is *shrouded* by ignorance; the beings are *deluded* thereby" (V, 15). The two stages so postulated are accordingly—

(1) the non-perception of the thing before us—the causal ignorance, given the name of *āvaraṇa* or "Screening", and

(2) the perception of a different thing in its stead—the resultant ignorance, given the name of *vikṣepa* or "Diverting."

## 2. *Right Knowledge*

It will be seen that, if the perception of a different thing alone is eliminated, the perception of the right thing is not a necessary consequence, for another different thing may still happen to be perceived. If I mistake a rope for a snake and if my perception of the snake alone is removed, I may still mistake it for a stick, a cleft in the ground or some other thing. The right thing is always one but the things seeming thereon by mistake are countless. A straight path from one place



to another is always one; there can be no two straight lines connecting two given points; the zigzag paths however are necessarily countless depending as they do on the whims and fancies of those who choose to create them. The giving up of one round-about path does not necessarily mean a return to the straight road. Similarly the attempt to escape a particular mistaken perception or Vikṣepa may land us in other perceptions which are equally Vikṣepa or mistaken, for the causal mistake of not perceiving the truth is still uneliminated and is quite potent. No attempt therefore is useful which aims merely at an elimination of Vikṣepa. In fact, on the other hand, even to the person who has a perception of the rope, the seeming snake may still present itself to his ocular perception but will no longer possess the characteristic of terrifying him. In other words, his realisation of the illusory nature of the snake need not make the snake disappear from his view; the perception may still continue but the reality of the thing perceived will be replaced by mere seemingness. It follows therefore that the elimination of Vikṣepa is insufficient to endow us with right knowledge and that the elimination of the causal ignorance or Āvarana is sufficient to render Vikṣepa harmless. The Vedāntin accordingly does not engage himself in the profitless task of tackling with all the Vikṣepas in the universe, for he knows that they are infinite in number and that all of them are but seemings and therefore false and impermanent. Those who have

strayed from the right knowledge only stray from one illusion to another, from that illusion to still another and so on for ever till they themselves learn, by experience and by the gracious teachings of some illumined soul, the illusory nature of all limited experiences. The main, or rather the only, aim of the Vedāntin is thus to get rid of the Āvarana or causal ignorance. The only way of getting rid of the non-perception of the rope in the seeming snake is to perceive the rope itself; no amount of effort at killing the snake, thinking that it is a true and live one, will be useful to enable us to perceive the rope; similarly, no amount of effort at tracing the egg from which the snake must have been hatched, on the assumption that it is a true snake, will be useful in the pursuit of right knowledge. Again, we saw in the foregoing pages that all effort or activity proceeds from a mistaken identification of our real self with the "doer" aspect which really appertains to the encasements; so long therefore as we are active, we are active only because we have not realised that we are really activity-less. We cannot help being active so long as there is a motive for activity; and there will be a motive for activity as long as we postulate a goal to be striven after and external to ourselves. The moment that we realise that the goal is reached and that in fact it was never away from or different from us, all effort has necessarily to cease. This realisation is itself the goal of all effort. We mentioned before that the only *means* of getting rid of the non-perception of the rope is to



know the rope; but it will be noted now that the only *result* also of getting rid of the non-perception of the rope is to know the rope. That is, to know the rope is both the means and the result. In all kinds of perception, effort is required only for the purpose of removing the obstructions to perception; perception by itself needs no independent effort; it follows as a matter of course the moment the impediments are removed. All effort is thus possible and necessary only during the stages of non-perception; it is neither possible nor necessary for it to co-exist with or help perception. It is in this view that the Advaitin emphatically repudiates the possibility of any co-ordination between Karma or activity and *jñāna* or right perception. He does not certainly mean that Karma is unnecessary in the antecedent stage of non-perception; in fact he insists on Karma as a necessary training for eliminating the impediments to right perception.

### 3. *The Knower*

It may have been noticed that we mentioned before that, when *Avidyā* the cause of duality is eradicated, all duality will cease to exist. It will be incorrect to say that any *identity* between Īśwara and the Jīva or any *identity* between Īśwara and the universe is realised in that stage, for Īśwara, the Jīva and the universe are limited conceptions which can never be identical with one another. The Advaita system therefore does

not postulate any identity between *two* things for it realises that if there *are* two things they can never be identical; but he enunciates the truth that there are *no two* things and that all is but one. He who has realised in direct experience this truth verily transcends all limitations of name and form and is called a Guṇātīta (XIV,20) one who has transcended the three Guṇas, or a Sthitaprajña (II, 55), one whose knowledge is firm. As he realises that there is but one Life pulsating in all the universe, but one Existence which lends reality to all things, but one Brightness which illumines all things, but one Bliss which permeates all things, nothing in the universe can make him happier for he is happiness itself and nothing can possibly hurt him for he is above all hurt. He has no further need to be active for he is the Goal himself. He has no further need to enjoy for he is Joy himself. He has no further need to know for he is Knowledge himself. He has burst asunder the shackles of nature. He is Himself.

But the further question suggests itself to the enquiring mind, does the person who attains such a state of realisation immediately cease to be a distinct individual or does he continue to be in our midst for any further time? If the answer to the former part of the question is in the affirmative, it would seem that death also is an immediate effect of such a realisation unless of course we say that such a realisation can never be had at any moment earlier than the last moment of his earthly life. If the answer to the latter part is in the affirmative, the



further question will arise, why does he continue to be embodied ? It cannot be by his own volition for no free man will ever voluntarily continue to be fettered; if, on the other hand, his continued embodiment is in spite of him, he cannot really be free. The Lord does not countenance at all the suggestion that realisation can come only at or before death or that death must immediately follow realisation. In fact if such a suggestion had any foundation in truth, there can be no Seers at all in the world for the moment one becomes a Seer he will cease to be. The Lord therefore says "Those whose mind is in equilibrium have conquered creation even here" (V, 19). That is, they continue to be in our midst but are no longer bound by limitations. They continue to be embodied not because they *will* it but because they have no reason to will otherwise. "He alone is a Seer who realises that all activities are done by the nature alone and that the Self is non-active" (XIII, 30). He is mostly self-centred. When however he happens to be awake to the world, he is a witness of all activities including those of his own body, senses and mind. All of them belong to the region of the *Kṣetra* or field; he remains as the *Kṣetrājña* or the knower of the field. When the initial impetus which gave this body birth and set it going works itself out, the body will in due course die or cease to be. Even the seeming inhering in a particular body disappears never more to return. *He* does not cease to be, but *He* is one with the infinite for ever more as he ever was.

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